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SOCCER WEEKLY

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SYDNEY UNITED'S UNWANTED HAT-TRICK OF REDS

Velimir Kupresak: Totally humiliated by a red card.

By John Economos

SYDNEY UNITED, last Sunday night at the Parramatta Stadium, suffered the indignity of having no less than three red cards issued to their players in their duel with the visiting Melbourne Knights.

The last red dished out by young referee Mark Shields was to United's unyielding classy centre-back, Velimir Kupresak.

Kupresak suffered huge personal humiliation when he received his marching orders with just nine minutes left of play.

Easily one of Australia's most reliable and consistent central markers who knows nothing but to always give 100%, was still very upset after the match in the Sydney United dressing rooms.

Well-known for his clean style of marking, the 34-year-old granite hard Kupresak softly lamented: "I have been sent-off only once before in almost 200 League games here in Australia.

"The first time was in the semi-finals four years ago when we played at the Marconi Stadium against South Melbourne.

"I feel very embarrassed, and totally humiliated."

Kupresak went on to methodically explain: "They, (the Knights), had won a corner late in the match and as it came across I went up for it together with one of their strikers.

"We both missed it as it sailed out of play.

"But I was baited by their player and was caught by the referee for retaliating.

"For me this incident (being red-carded) has been very embarrassing. Very embarrassing.

"I take much pride in my play and have always played Soccer as cleanly as possible," ended United's unyielding central marker.

After having played in the First Division League in Croatia for Borovo, the powerfully built, but gentle ace defender, migrated to Australia ten years ago.

He was immediately signed by Sydney United.

The highly experienced marker has been the spine of Sydney United's rock defence ever since.

Married, with two daughters, Kupresak's normal working day starts as early as 4.30am, earning his living as a painting contractor.

After a heavy day's work, the durable Velimir backs up and reports to the training track for his coach David Mitchell, and doesn't finish till 6.30pm.

Tenacious in the tackle, extremely powerful in all aerial combats, Velimir Kupresak is one of Australia's three most valuable and experienced defenders.

WOMEN'S SOCCER FINALS

(See pages 2 & 15)

EXCLUSIVE – CRAIG JOHNSTON TALKS TO ABSW

Editorial

The football finally came back to the NSL last weekend and, at time of writing, we can only hope that everyone is refreshed from their enforced break and is raring to go.

Adelaide City proved, during the middle of last week, they are certainly looking good for a Top Six placing, although the performance against Wollongong City (see page 11 for full details) would indicate they have set their sights on the top prize and nothing less.

Sydney United and South Melbourne would certainly, at this stage, look to be the top contenders, along with the Zebras, for the Grand Final but, as we have seen before, the real work starts now. This is the business end of the season.

It would be far more satisfying if there was promotion/relegation up for grabs as the clubs at the bottom would be battling for their divisional status which, in turn, would keep the fans coming to suffer the triumphs and misfortunes of their side as the season brings about its conclusion.

However, sad as it may be, this scenario does not exist in NSL football in Australia ... yet!

It is no great secret that many within the sport favour this, virtually ALL supporters would welcome it, as it gives the players/teams a distinct reason to fight until the final whistle of their final game.

One day perhaps?

★★★

The more diligent among you will have noticed the price changes in our travel advertisements.

This has been caused by the fluctuation in fortunes of the Australian dollar.

Much as the companies involved would dearly love to keep the prices as low as possible, these changes have been forced upon them by the airlines etc.

Take Marconi-Journey Travel (see page 17). They have been taking tours to the last six World Cup tournaments around the world and, without blowing their own trumpets, are one of a small, select band to be given official sanction from the game's governing body, FIFA, to operate as tour specialists for the competition (see page 3).

They are certainly the only 'official' tour managers in Australia to receive this high accolade.

They currently have two tour options — to follow England or Scotland, or Italy, during June and July in France.

The prices are well within the range of most pockets and are as low as can humanly be kept for the fans.

So long as there is a company that looks after the fans, arranges tours for the fans and, let's face it, can count themselves amongst the fans, touring the football matches of the world from this great continent is a reality and not a mystical flight of fancy.

Long may it continue.

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COACHING NEWS

NICK T SIGNS LONG-TERM WITH WOLVES

By Phil Murphy

Nick Theodorakopoulos agreed to renew his contract with the Wollongong Wolves shortly before Sunday's game against Sydney Olympic at Brandon Park.

The announcement was welcomed by the large contingent of Wolves supporters at the game.

His decision followed three weeks of uncertainty after the newly privatised Sydney Olympic stated that they wanted the Wolves coach.

The former Olympic striker has become a popular figure on the NSW South Coast. He has the Wolves playing an exciting brand of football and is confident of making the play-offs.

Next season could be even more interesting for the Wolves fans.

In negotiations for a new contract, Theodorakopoulos has asked the Wolves board to strengthen his squad to give him a chance of doing something that has never happened before on the South Coast: winning the national league Grand Final.

The board will oblige.

Theodorakopoulos, who only days ago was asked to assist the Olyroos in the up-coming Brazil games, told ABSW he was pleased with the negotiations and that the uncertainty of the last few weeks was now behind him.

He said it was obvious he was on "Sydney Olympic's shopping list"

"Many people thought I would jump at the chance to go back to my old club," he said.

"Two years ago I possibly would have. Since then Wollongong have become my club.

"I have made a lot of friends in the city and enjoy working with the players.

"They are a hard-working and talented group who want to succeed as much as I do .

"I am happy with what I have achieved at Brandon Park so far, but I have not finished yet.

"The board assure me they will strengthen the squad and I am looking at some quality players.

"Hopefully we will also come to some agreement with Kosta Salapasidis. Kosta is keen to play abroad but if he doesn't get a club we would like to keep him here."

Nick Theodorakopoulos arrived at Brandon Park three seasons ago.

He was an unknown quantity as a coach and many people thought the club was selling itself short. They were demanding that the club board take on a more high profile coach.

Those same people were demanding that Theodorakopoulos be allowed to leave after his team crumbled badly towards the end of last year, after sitting in third place well into the season in a dismal run home.

This year the team has promised to make amends.

Captain Matt Horsley was pleased that his coach has pledged himself to the club.

He said the coach was respected by the players and worked very hard at his job.

"We are really keen to finish in the top six for the sake of our supporters," Horsley said.

"They have been great this season.

"Our crowds have been up this season and there has been plenty of noise at Brandon Park because of the way we have played."

With seven rounds to play the Wolves still have four games — South Melbourne, Adelaide Sharks, Perth Glory and Sydney United, all at the cauldron of Brandon Park.

Terry Venables' Future

Terry Venables

Soccer Australia has put a proposal to Terry Venables involving coaching the Socceroos.

It outlines other options available to Venables, including using his knowledge as assistance to the 2000 Olympics team, or becoming technical director of coaching in Australia, aiding in the development of the coaching pool of talent within Australia.

David Hill and Terry Venables will be talking over the next few weeks about this proposal. Venables left Australia last week, and before he left the Chairman of Soccer Australia was quoted as saying "Terry has been fantastic for Australian soccer. It would be terific if we could keep him.

"It has been a good experience for Australia and I am sure it has been a good experience for Terry as well. We are hopeful we can still retain him."

Raul Blanco will continue to be coach of the Olympic team, and Terry Venables' valuable contributions would be added if he accepts that part of the offer.

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GOOD OIL GOOD OIL GOOD OIL GOOD OIL

By John Economos

Frank Farina has become the favourite name being banded around out Marconi way to take over the coaching helm for next season, should incumbent coach Zoran Matic decide he must return to Adelaide due to pressures in his personal business.

However, at the beginning of the season it was almost certain that Matic could not afford the time to stay any longer than for just one season.

Zoran Matic: Will Farina replace him?

At the moment, however, the odds of Matic continuing at Marconi next season have recently dramatically increased.

★★★

Australian Soccer fans heading for France in June for the World Cup finals are in for a terrible shock and should hastily contact their respective travel agencies as soon as possible.

For example, Category 1 tickets for the Final of the World Cup, originally had been costed by FIFA at $450 each.

But today, travel agencies right across the world, scrambling to buy tickets for their packages, are being forced to cough up a monumental premium of $4,325 each for the Final.

Why this huge increase in costings?

Well it all stems from the fact that the 'Mason De La France' (the French organising committee) had appointed 17 agencies across the globe to distribute World Cup tickets. Just 17!

Each of these ticketing agencies are believed to have paid up to US$1 million each to obtain such rights of distribution.

These agencies are now demanding for Category 3 tickets (behind the goals) US$2,000 for tickets originally valued at just US$190.

For Round 1, tickets originally valued at some Aust$50 are now Aust$375.

But as the Man from DemTel says, "there's more, much more".

All tickets to all of Japan's matches have already been completely sold out at Aust $1,050 per ticket. And that's for Round 1.

World Cup packages that had been put together months ago by travel agents, have lately seen their costings completely and utterly wrecked by these 17 specially appointed agencies.

Our current national inflation, according to our A.B.S. and Reserve Bank, might be running at 2.2%, but as far as World Cup Soccer tickets are concerned, the sky now seems to be the limit.

★★★

Paul Agostino, the forgotten young quality international striker of Australia, is personally doing very well in the German Bundesliga despite his club 1860 Munich languishing near the bottom of the League.

Since switching from England's Bristol City to Germany, Australia's magnificent 1993 World Youth Championship striker has started in 11 matches in the first team.

However last week the brilliant 22-year-old Australian came off the bench to quickly score two goals but was unable to stave off defeat for 1860, who still went down 4-3 to Bayer Leverkusen.

Formerly from West Adelaide, the elegant Agostino has surprisingly and repeatedly been ignored for national selection by Australia's coach Terry Venables.

Most surprisingly that is as Agostino is a lethal aerial weapon and, together with West Ham's brilliant attacking midfielder Stan Lazaridis supplying outstanding quality crosses from the left, Australia has been wasting this talent in recent years.

★★★

The South Korean World Cup squad ended their Australian tour last week at the Marconi Stadium where they defeated the home side 1-3 in a hotly-contested battle.

The match ended with the last few minutes being played with such competitive hostility referee Simon Micallef was forced to send-off two Koreans plus Marconi's gangling striker Francis Awaritefe.

Skipper Brad Maloney scored Marconi's goal and opener early in the match after South Korea had made an explosive start to the battle, bombarding Marconi's goals but failing to score.

★★★

Sydney United last Thursday night played an exhibition match against the Japanese World Cup team at the Gabbie Stadium in Sydney's outer west.

United, gallantly led by the tenacious central marker Velimir Kupresak, gave the Japanese a stiff work out keeping the tourist down to a 0-1 scoreline.

★★★

SBS TV will screen the European Champions League quarter-final between Germany's two star club sides, defending champions Borussia Dortmund against hungry challengers Bayern Munich.

The first-leg to be screened by SBS will be on Thursday March 5 at 7pm (South Australia 6.30pm), with the second-leg from Dortmund to be screened on Thursday March 19 at the same time slots.

The Euro Champions League comprises 24 of Europe's elite clubs.

To be admitted to this prestigious League, each Club must have won its respective domestic League.

But in some cases, for countries such as Italy, England, Spain and Germany, the clubs that came second have also been included in this League.

Borussia, last season in the Final, shocked the Italian aristocrats, Juventus.

★★★

Johnny Nyskohus, Adelaide City's very reserved coach, after watching his side toss the mobile visiting Wollongong City 4-2 last Wednesday night in a deferred match, was most complimentary towards the Wolves.

This was most rare coming from the coach of the 'Black and Whites'.

"Wollongong lost this match but I really believe that they will definitely make the Top Six play-offs.

"They are being well supported and have been playing very good Soccer for most of the season."

★★★

Brisbane Lions, will officially open their brand new multi-million dollar social club in the first week of next month.

The Lions, easily one of the most progressive Soccer clubs in Queensland's XXXX State League, have spent just over $2.5 million on developing their premises at Richlands, adjacent to their home ground.

The Club's register of members has already swelled from 500 to well over 3,500 and still rapidly growing at the rate of almost 1,000 new members per month.

Directors of the Lions Club have targeted to have at least 6,000 members by the end of this year on their register.

The Club presently has 72 poker machines installed.

Brisbane Lions, who for the fourth consecutive season are coached by the highly astute

Francis Awaritefe: Sent off.

Miron Bleiberg: Lions' astute coach.

Miron Bleiberg, last Sunday played in the Final of the 'Silver Boot' pre-season Cup against Beenleigh. The Lions ended up winning 3-2 on the 'Golden Goal' rule with the Lions having to complete the match without a regular goalkeeper, who was sent-off in the 57th minute.

★★★

Northern Spirit, the newly admitted Sydney club to the Ericsson National League next season, has not been idle in chasing up recruits.

Having already quickly signed up player-coach Graham Arnold, Robbie Slater, and Scott Ollerenshaw on loan from Malaysian club Sabah, the Spirit is still in the hunt for more high-profiled players.

Last week it is believed they snapped up Carlton's ace-playmaker Kresimir Marusic and are also highly favoured to sign Sydney Olympic's young strapping international right flanker, Brett Emerton.

Marconi's right wingback and Olympic international, Luke Casserly, is another that is almost ready to sign with the fledgling club.

★★★

The Northern Spirit, if nothing else, is certainly most ambitious in their head-hunting crusade and is believed to have had Sydney United's towering goalkeeper Zeljko Kalac on its shopping list as well.

But late last week 'Good Oil' uncovered an even more illustrious name that the Spirit is seeking to wear the gloves between their posts for season 1989-99.

The clue is, his name can be found on the playing staff of England's Division One club, Oxford United.

Give up?

Would you believe former Liverpool's comical custodian Bruce Grobbelaar?

Surely at the moment, one would find it most difficult to come up with a name that is bigger, or has been more in the spotlight the past two years as far as goalkeepers are concerned, than Grobbelaar's.

★★★

David Mitchell, Sydney United's mercurial player-coach, had has and possibly will continue to have till the end of the season, the most demanding coaching assignment in the entire League.

Big Mitch first took up his position at United during the off-season just as the Club had its Grand Final X1 almost totally savaged by no less than nine players sold in the transfer market.

Then his Club became embroiled with laborious legal actions with of all people, Soccer Australia.

There's more, much more.

Having no funds with which to replenish his totally depleted League squad, 'Big Mitch' embarked on the difficult crusade of carefully picking up players that would cost United no monies to buy.

Having cleared these troublesome three hurdles, Mitch gallantly battled his side to the top of the League with miraculous expertise.

Then 'hurdle No 4' struck the former international striker four weeks ago.

Mitchell suffered a badly torn medial ligament to his left knee that sidelined him for six weeks, and severely blunted United's attack-line.

But still Mitchell kept the 'United ship' on course despite choppy seas forever confronting him.

Now we find that the United club is in financial turmoil, with Mitchell's players not having been paid for almost 10 weeks.

Yet still Mitchell was able to hold team morale up whilst club officials scrambled around to organise urgently needed funds.

By now, with seemingly the whole world on his shoulders, one would think that Mitchell should have changed his name to 'Atlas'.

Last Sunday night at the Parramatta Stadium the always unyielding Mitchell sat helplessly as he watched referee Mark Shields issue no less than THREE red cards, all of them to his players (Barrett, Plesa and Kupresak).

Understandably the now crippled United plunged to a 0-3 loss at the hands of the Melbourne Knights.

This Friday night the undaunted Mitchell travels to the Topper Stadium to face John Kosmina's young, fighting Newcastle Breakers, minus three of his ace-Pumas.

If the phlegmatic United boss comes back down to Sydney with ANY points at all from this clash, forget the first alias of 'Atlas', as 'Houdini' would fit ever so much more appropriately.

★★★

MARCONI v WOLLONGONG

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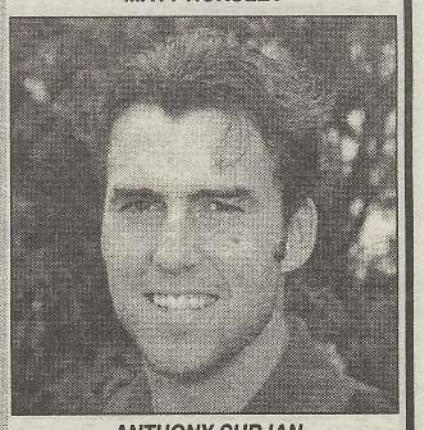

ANTHONY SURJAN

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NSW PRE-SEASON CUP

RAMS ON TRACK

Macarthur Rams remain on track for a semi-final spot after overcoming a determined St. George Saints at Lynwood Park.

The Rams 2-1 win pushed them equal top with Eastern Suburbs, who surprisingly went down to Canterbury.

Eric Williams continued his good early season form with the opening goal just after half-time, latching onto a superb pass by Matthew O'Shea.

Macarthur's other in-form striker, Trevor Whiddett, put them two up seven minutes later to provide a little breathing space.

A good individual goal by Jim Corbo, with just minutes to play, earned St. George a consolation goal.

Canterbury Marrickville caused an upset with a 1-0 win over in form Eastern Suburbs.

Easts, riding high after several good results, left empty-handed from Henson Park, after Peter Joannou scored the only the goal of the game in the 63rd minute.

The win gives Canterbury a remote chance of a semi-final spot but needs a big win over St George in their final game plus Easts or Macarthur to lose.

In the final match, Leichhardt easily accounted for Sutherland Sharks by two goals to nil at Lambert Park.

They, likewise, have a remote chance but need a big win over Macarthur for any realistic hope.

LEADING GOALSCORERS

Trevor Whiddett (Rams) 5
Peter Preston (Coasties) 3
Eric Williams (Rams) 3

FEDERATION DIVISION ONE

Moorebank Sports 1 Rockdale City Suns 4; Penrith Panthers 0 Bathurst '75 1; Belmore Hercules 0 AC United 3; Manly Warringah 0 Auburn United 2; Hurstville City 2 Fairfield Bulls 1; Hills United 1 Illawarra Lions 0; Mt Pritchard 1 Stanmore Hawks 3.

RESULTS

NORTH GROUP

Bonnyrigg WE Mancino 10 Janic 70	2	Blacktown City Berry 75	1
Central Coast Roberts 1 Sontag 23p Preston 68	3	Bankstown City Van Benturn 41 Lozevski 55	2
Parra Eagles Mittiga 15	1	Ryde City Koch 89	1

SOUTH GROUP

Mac Rams Williams 48 Whiddett 55	2	St George Sts Corbo 87	1
Suth Sharks	0	Leichhardt T Bazdaric 28 Buonavoglia 78	2
Canterbury Ber Joannou 63	1	Eastern Subs	0

NORTH GROUP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	DIF	PTS
Bonnyrigg WE	4	4	0	0	9	3	6	12
Parramatta Eagles	4	2	1	1	8	4	4	7
Central Coast	4	2	0	2	7	10	-3	6
Blacktown City	4	2	0	2	5	8	-3	6
Ryde City	4	1	1	2	5	5	0	4
Bankstown City	4	0	0	4	6	10	-4	0

SOUTH GROUP

Eastern Suburbs	4	3	0	1	12	3	9	9
Macarthur Rams	4	3	0	1	10	4	6	9
Canterbury M'ville	4	2	0	2	5	6	-1	6
Leichhardt Tigers	4	2	0	2	5	7	-2	6
St. George Saints	4	2	0	2	5	8	-3	6
Sutherland Sharks	4	0	0	4	1	10	-9	0

BORG HUMBLES DEMONS

Highly-rated and exciting young prospect Matthew Borg destroyed a lethargic Blacktown City Demons as Ryde City scored an impressive 4-0 upset win at the Gabbie Stadium.

Borg scored two goals and set-up the third as Ryde threw the form book out the window to demoralise a very disappointing Demons outfit.

Ryde, newly promoted from the First Division and coming off two losses in their first pre-season cup clashes, never looked back after opening the scoring in the third minute.

Having been held scoreless in its opening two games, Borg got Ryde off to a flyer by lashing a volley past Fernando Greco after great work by Jeff Kelly on the left.

Eight minutes later Ryde were two up when Borg intercepted a stray pass across the Demons backline, raced towards goal, before coolly placing his shot to the left of Greco and inside the post.

Blacktown, for their part, lacked flair in attack and rarely broke down the Ryde defence, led superbly by the experienced Richard Miranda.

Ryde's midfield combination of Adam Peatey — on loan from Blacktown — John Koch and Jeff Kelly were causing Blacktown all sorts of problems, while Borg's pace up front proved telling.

Ryde had two more great opportunities to score when Borg was twice played through with perfect passes, the first he played to Tim Stratford who skied his shot over the bar and a second which was parried away by Greco.

Ryde pressure did not let up in the second-half and Stratford was denied twice in several minutes by Greco at the near post.

It was Ryde all the way as Blacktown fell to pieces, giving away possession too easily and allowing the Ryde players to run at will.

Tim Gledhill's introduction provided new hope for Ryde, who outpaced Damien Foxe after just coming on but he shot straight at Greco.

Two minutes later great work by at least six Ryde players saw Borg set Gledhill free down the left and he cracked his shot home from ten yards out.

Chance after chance was made by Ryde, but for Greco's outstanding performance in goals for the Demons, it could have been even more embarrassing.

But for all his heroics there was nothing he could do about Ryde's fourth and Gledhill's second, with the young striker faking his initial shot before going around Greco and shooting home from an acute angle.

The win was Ryde's first points in the competition, while Blacktown's chances of making the semi-finals have nosedived with their goal difference blowing out.

Ryde have arrived in the big-time.

EASTS CRUISE PAST TIGERS

Eastern Suburbs continued to serve notice to all that they are a team to be reckoned with, after annihilating Leichhardt Tigers 5-1, also at the Gabbie Stadium.

It was certainly a night for the Super League's newest clubs as Easts also got off to a flying start and they never looked back.

A double by Mick Daniels in the opening seven minutes sent them on their way to what was a comprehensive victory.

His first came after three minutes, shooting past Jose Bello-Amigo from ten metres, and four minutes later he forced the ball over the line after receiving an exquisite cross from former Latvian midfielder Vadim Mikoutski.

To Leichhardt's credit they did not drop their heads and kept coming at Easts, but with big Les Bihari directing his defence they found shots on goal hard to come by.

Mikoutski was proving a headache for the Leichhardt defence and was denied a goal by Bello-Amigo after 27 minutes. But in the 38th minute Bello-Amigo was beaten by Mikoutski's perfectly placed shot after receiving a short pass from Craig Sharpley's free-kick.

To Leichhardt's horror though the scoring didn't stop there, with their defence allowing Peter Pullicino to waltz through, lay off to Jim Melissourgos who made no mistake with his shot.

The second-half saw Easts continue with its dominance and they went five up after great work by Daniels providing the perfect ball for former Newcastle Breaker Craig Sharpley to slam home.

Leichhardt notched a consolation goal when Bihari was caught out of his area, Zoran Ilic capitalising with a well weighted lob. They could have two more goals but Dean Harding and David Guzzo wasted simple opportunities from in front.

In other round three matches ...

Macarthur Rams came from a goal down after just one minute against **Canterbury Marrickville,** to win 4-1 at St. George Stadium. Trevor Whiddett, with his second double of the competition, proved the main difference on the night and reinforcing the strong belief that Macarthur is a strong finals contender this year.

Mark Pillemer was another to score a double on Wednesday night, in **St. George's** 3-1 win over **Sutherland Sharks** at St. George Stadium.

In the North Group, the early send-off of Central Coast keeper Steffan Jurd and resulting penalty conversion by Mark Hoenselaars set **Bonnyrigg** up for its 3-1 win over **Central Coast**. Hoenselaars made the most of it scoring a first hat-trick after he was presented with two further goals by stand-in keeper Brett Margin.

However, while Margin was lost in the first-half, he produced some fantastic saves in the second, which in turn boosted the confidence of the Coasties who, despite being a man down, actually played the better football. They scored a deserved goal through Peter Preston after 68 minutes.

In the final game, **Parramatta Eagles** saw off a determined challenge by **Bankstown City** to win 2-1. Two early and quick goals from a Saso Petrovski penalty and two minutes later a goal from Malcolm Meilak was enough for the Eagles.

A late first-half goal by trialing Robert Issa put Bankstown back into the game but they couldn't find pull back the deficit in the second stanza.

LEADING GOAL SCORERS

Trevor Whiddett (Macarthur)	4
Vadim Mikoutski (Easts)	3
Jim Melissourgos (Easts)	3
Mick Daniels (Easts)	3
George Kategiannis (Canterbury)	3
Mark Hoenselaars (Bonnyrigg)	3
Brett Kinnimont (Parramatta)	3

RYDE STUN EAGLES

Ryde City stunned Parramatta Eagles with a late equaliser in their Round Four pre-season cup clash at Melita Stadium.

Parramatta looked to be cruising towards a 1-0 win, and a virtual guarantee of a semi-final spot, when John Koch bobbed up at the near post to slam his header into the top corner from a free-kick taken by Nils Johnsson.

Up until then Parramatta had controlled the match but were frustrated by Ryde's defence and goalkeeper Anthony, playing his first match for the club.

Parramatta took the lead in the 15th minute through exciting young midfielder Tony Mittiga. Receiving the ball in front of goal he beat the desperate lunge of Richard Miranda before coolly placing his shot past a badly exposed Avellino.

Ryde, coming off a 4-0 win over Blacktown, found Parramatta a much tougher unit to break down and rarely threatened Jason Holmes goal.

Brett Kinnimont had two chances either side of the half-time break to extend the Eagles lead but was thwarted on both occasions by Avellino. However Avellino's best save came shortly after, turning away at full stretch a goalbound shot from Malcolm Meilak.

The game opened up with 15 minutes to go and Ryde should have equalised when Craig Moffatt found himself with an open goal from just seven metres but skied his shot over the bar, while substitute Tim Gledhill beat the offside trap only to see his shot saved by Holmes.

The game looked lost for Ryde and when they were awarded a free kick wide on the right, Koch made the most of loose marking to give Holmes no chance.

Parramatta now face a crucial game with Bonnyrigg on Wednesday night, with a draw likely to see them through, while Ryde must win big against Bankstown and hope other results go their way.

Bonnyrigg ensured themselves of a semi-final spot with a 2-1 win over Blacktown City at the Serbian Centre.

Javier Mancino opened the scoring in the 10th minute and went further ahead through Stefan Janic with just 20 minutes remaining.

Blacktown hit back five minutes later thanks to a good goal by Steve Berry, setting up a grand finish with Bonnyrigg hanging on at the end.

Central Coast kept their semi-final hopes alive with a hard fought 3-2 win over Bankstown City at Pluim Park.

They were given a great start by Paul Roberts after just a minute and added a second from the penalty spot through Stewart Sontag.

Successive goal by Stewart Van Bentum and Mendo Lozevski put Bankstown back on level terms, but, for the fourth game in a row, were beaten by the odd goal after in form Peter Preston grabbed the winner for the Coasties.

The Blacktown and Coasties clash could prove crucial if Parramatta lose with a winner to advance through to the finals.

NSW Soccer Federation

PRE-SEASON CUP - ROUND 5

Tuesday February 24
St George Stadium
(S) Sutherland Sharks v Eastern Suburbs — 6.30pm
(S) Canterbury M'ville v St George Saints — 8.15pm

Wednesday February 25
Serbian Centre
(S) Macarthur Rams v Leichhardt Tigers — 6.30pm
(N) Bonnyrigg W.E. v Parramatta Eagles — 8.15pm

St George Stadium
(N) Bankstown City Lions v Ryde City — 6.30pm
(N) Central Coast v Blacktown City Demons — 8.15pm
(N) North group, (S) South group

SEMI-FINALS

Sunday March 1 — Henson Park
Winner North Group v Runner Up South Group — 4.00pm
Winner South Group v Runner Up North Group — 6.00pm

AROUND THE CLUBS

PUMAS IMPRESS JAPANESE

By Stuart Jones

SYDNEY UNITED 0
JAPAN 1

On Thursday night Sydney United lost 0-1 to the Japanese national team at Gabbie Stadium.

This was a solid hit-out for both teams, and the Pumas played extremely well, stretching the Japanese defence time and time again.

After going toe-to-toe for thirty minutes the Japanese opened the scoring. Hidetoshi Nakata played the ball into the penalty area from a free-kick. Kas Miura collected the ball, chipped the defence in the area then dummyed a volley to put Zeljko Kalac off before putting the ball in the back of the net on the half-volley for a class finish.

Within ten minutes of the break Robbie Hooker was pulled down in the area by Hideto Suzuki. Abbas Saad stepped up to take the penalty only to belt it against the post. It was not the first time the ball had hit the framework as early on in the match Miura (who turns 31 this week) hit the underside of the bar, but the ball spun away from the goal-line.

The other move that stood out during the game was Japan's 24 different players used, while Sydney United opted for 16.

Takeshi Okada, the Japanese manager, later praised Sydney United for their play. "This was a very good game for us, Sydney United are a very nice team, we needed to work on our defence and could tonight. They play a good physical game and I was really impressed with their tactics. I was impressed with their back three, maybe I should ask Mr. Mitchell about this system. Overall this has been a very successful tour for us, the facilities have been great, and the people so cheerful and friendly."

Japan returned home last Friday, and now go into preparations for the Dynasty Cup which kicks off March 1.

'FRIENDLY' TURNS NASTY

By Stuart Jones

MARCONI 1
SOUTH KOREA 3

This match at Marconi Stadium, which South Korea won 3-1, saw referee Simon Micallef the centre of attention at full time.

In the 87th minute he sent-off two Korean players, Sang-Chu Yoo and Sang-Hun Lee and also Marconi's Francis Awaritefe. This came after Awaritefe looked to have been held back by a Korean player, leading to a scuffle between the three players.

Prior to this the game had been played at intensity levels unusual for a friendly match, with neither side giving any quarter.

Two goals in the last five minutes of the firstt-half certainly added spice to the game, with Brad Maloney scoring first in the 41st minute. He chipped the keeper after Vlado Zoric had put a great ball through from the left. Two minutes later Ki-Hyung Lee played it back brilliantly from the byline to Korean star Yong-Soo Choi, whose ferocious shot beat Ante Covic and Brad Maloney, who was defending the goal-line.

Twelve minutes into the second half and Yong-Soo Choi was again at his very best, as he swerved and turned in the penalty area to gain some room, and he clinically put the ball away to put South Korea in front for the first time in the game.

Then, fifteen minutes from the end, he was at it again, this time setting up Sang-Chu Yoo's goal, with more 'dancing' in the penalty area.

For Marconi the night was costly, with Mark Babic being injured and Awaritefe's sending-off meaning a one game suspension (which was wiped last Friday night when the Stallions played Super League side Parramatta Eagles in another friendly game).

VIC VOICE

By Dwyght Tuffnell

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS

Striker Adrian Cervinski appears certain to join his brother, defender David Cervinski, at Carlton.

The striker, who has battled serious injuries over the past two years, has been training with the Blues.

The trouble started when Cervinski announced himself a free agent, after saying that the Knights had terminated his contract and hadn't been keeping up with his payments.

He is still under contract with the Knights and a meeting is planned for this week between the two parties.

If nothing is resolved at the meeting, the matter will be decided at a tribunal hearing.

He hasn't played a first team game this season but is close to be being fit to play again.

A foot injury, that at one stage threatened his career, has limited him to sporadic appearances (playing with pain killers as well).

Just when he was nearly fit again a few months ago, he again broke down, this time with a knee complaint.

In other news, the Knights also look like they may lose current reserve goalkeeper Vilson Knezevic.

The giant keeper is said to be unhappy at Knights Stadium as he is unable to claim a first-team place.

Terrific form from Olyroo keeper Joe Didulica is keeping Knezevic on the outer.

22-year-old Knezevic has played just nine games with the Knights, his second was the 1996 Grand Final against Marconi.

He broke his arm against South Melbourne early last season and lost his place to Didulica. His form since has recognised him as one of the outstanding goalkeepers in the league.

CARLTON

The Blues have lost prized midfielder Kresimir Marusic to new Sydney club, Northern Spirit.

Last season's 'Player-of-the-Year' has failed to settle in Melbourne and wants a return to Sydney.

He has struggled this season with a groin injury, limiting his appearances and keeping his performances well below what he showed last year with Sydney United.

Marusic first came to Australia in 1995 from Croatian team Sibenik to play with Melbourne Knights.

He won a championship medal with the Knights and returned two seasons later to play with United.

The Blues have also released three young players on loan. Midfielder Andy Vargas and strikers Daniel Allsopp and Branko Bacak have been allowed to go on loan to find regular first-team football.

Allsopp's likely destination appears to be Canberra Cosmos whilst Vargas may play in the Victorian Premier League.

Meanwhile Carlton have signed 22-year-old Vlado Mirkovic, a Yugoslav who has played for Rudar and Vojvodina.

Kresimir Marusic

NORTHERN NEW SOUTH WALES

By Dane Skafte

Newcastle Breakers centre-midfielder Peter Ritchie and big striker Clayton Zane have both been selected in the Olyroos squad to play Brazil's Olympic team in Australia next month.

Ritchie and Zane travelled to Albury for a week long camp to prepare for a three-match Olympic warm-up series against the South Americans.

The 25-man squad will be cut after this week's camp, which is being held in Ritchie's home town, for the Brazilian matches.

Ritchie was pleased that the national selectors were still looking at him, especially for the Sydney 2000 games.

"I have been in a few young Socceroo camps and I will be happy if I make the final cut," he said.

The 20-year-old changed positions this year from defender to centre-midfield after Newcastle coach John Kosmina believed the change would improve his game.

"Since I have moved into the midfield I have been getting a lot more of the ball and my positioning has improved," he noted.

He will miss this week's league match after recently incurring a two-week suspension.

Northern NSW Soccer Federation (NNSWSF) development officers, Bruce Tracey and Mark Ambler recently returned from Lismore after conducting a Level 2 coaching course and school development.

The course attracted 22 coaches from Balina, Casino, Grafton, Lismore and other rural areas.

The Level 2 course involved the eight principles of soccer, such as attack and defence, laws of the game, and a theory examination.

Clayton Zane

According to Ambler, the nine days were a great success with the focus set on encouraging girls aged 14 to become involved in soccer with a view of commencing a grade 14 girls competition this season.

"The support shown from Australian Women's Soccer by bringing the Matildas and China to Lismore last year highlights the strength of women's soccer in the north," Ambler concluded.

★★★

Veteran midfielder Robbie Ironside has recovered from his knee injury and played for the Breakers against Perth last Sunday.

Ironside has struggled for the last two months with damage to his left knee.

He scored twice for Newcastle against local First Division side Edgeworth Eagles in the well deserved 6–1 win for the Breakers.

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Defend, Don't Condemn!

Dear Sir,

With the way things are shaping up 'hypothetically' in your scenario, it is not a reality yet. What is a reality is nationality.

When Parramatta Eagles were unfairly thrown out of the Ericsson Cup, it appeared because they were an 'ethnic' club and didn't have any Australian born players. Therefore they couldn't play at their home ground.

When people are complaining in ABSW about supporters at soccer matches shouting 'Croatia, Croatia', you do not defend them by saying it is a free country.

Do you tell the British 'ethnics' they do not have an accent but only those that perhaps sound different to you? You know well that the British won't mix, change or adjust to any other culture, but the Croatians must be forced to change, to become acceptable. They must shout 'Sydney United' apparently but that sounds a little like 'England uber alles' to me!

I am a 68-year old man who speaks English with an Hungarian accent and am on speaking terms with all nationalities, except when in shopping centres or streets. Here, when I speak or ask someone something I get a reply of: "You've got an accent, I don't understand you, what are you saying?".

To this I usually reply: "Go and jump in a lake." Suddenly the response is: "Behave yourself, be polite," but then I say: "You understand when I say that but not when I asked you for something."

There is nothing wrong with my accent but you are probably a conceited English person who does not want to help me or speak to me because I am not English."

Only once since 1957 did a young woman say to me: "You're probably right, but sorry, that's the way we are!".

I think this is the reason why the British and other races do not mix, or go to watch soccer matches.

If Perth Glory supporters are English ethnics, that is surely the proof of what I am saying. If Northern Spirit get 15,000 supporters wouldn't that also be a form of 'nationality' too?

If they get 2,500, as the NSL bosses do for business, they will probably fold just as Collingwood did.

If it's a choice between no soccer and soccer with no privatised clubs, I am in favour of the latter. The reason Mr Hill does not urge clubs towards privatisation is because of his dream of 'one city, one team'.

So far, that is all it has remained, a dream.

R. Marton,
St Marys, NSW.

Editor's note:

1/ Privatised clubs will be run properly, as a business, ensuring a healthy future for the game, 2/ How many Italians, Greeks, Asians or even Hungarians etc. do you see at Sydney United or, if it comes to that, any other matches?, 3/ Ask Perth Glory and they will tell you they have a grand mixture of cultures making up their support, not just Brits, 4/ The 'hypothetical' scenario referred to is obviously not a reality, anything 'hypothetical' never is and should have been used as an example of what COULD happen if clubs cannot arrest the small attendance problem. It was not a racist doctrine in any way, shape or form. Read the facts presented to you for what they are, not what you want to read into them.

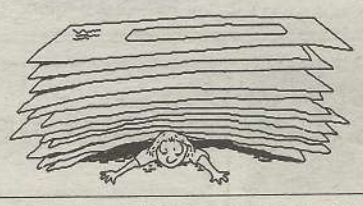
If you own a shop that gets ten customers a day and the one next door gets 500, pretty soon it is they who will have a 'superstore' pitted against your market stall.

That's the reality, race is never the issue, 'bums on seats' IS and until the local crowds make welcome supporters from across the cultural spectrum that is Australia, their future remains grim.

You cannot help those who will not help themselves. Lastly, I am Australian, we are talking about Australian soccer and the focus should not be shifted away from that. We have had a number of letters on this in recent weeks and we now declare the subject CLOSED!

Letters to the Editor

Have your say on any soccer issue in the world. Preference will be given to short letters. Include daytime phone number for verification.



The Editor,
Australian & British Soccer Weekly
PO BOX 155,
Marrickville
NSW 2204
Fax: (02) 9550-9332

Short letters of about 400 words will be given preference in this column.

The opinions expressed on this page do not necessarily reflect those of this newspaper

Dear Terry...

Dear Sir,

There have been very few games we have missed involving the Socceroos, and I have to say since Terry Venables took over as coach we have enjoyed immensely the style of play.

Under Eddie Thomson, the players had a certain amount of success, however the negative style of football was, at times, depressing, even when winning you still left the stadium feeling disappointed.

If the last World Youth Cup is any guide, this style of football has been continued on under Raoul Blanco.

One question I would like to ask Raoul Blanco is: how many home matches he has been to in the Ericsson Cup? I feel there are some very talented players who were missed in this last three match tournament, however, I feel, considering the circumstances, the players did very well, as it must have been very difficult for them.

I would like to say this to Terry Venables: if you do decide to stay on as coach, it could be the biggest challenge you will ever face, but also the most rewarding, if you succeed. You have the product, the Australian boys, we could become one of the top nations in the world, but it will take full commitment from you.

If you do, when you start watching the Ericsson Cup, you will be pleasantly surprised at the talent we have in this country. I do hope you decide to stay for a very selfish reason, we have really enjoyed your style of coaching.

Mrs C. Montgomery
Loftus, NSW.

Editor's note:

I have seen Mr Blanco at many games this season, but I'm not here to defend him. Football is, and will remain, a matter of opinion and long may that continue. Many feel that a recent editorial was directed at a certain section of the community instead of reading the facts as they were presented. It is their right to do that, which then becomes their opinion. I still feel that the national coach must spend more time in Australia when the NSL is in full swing to see the potential stars of the international stage.

As for Eddie Thomson, I firmly believe he took Australia as far as he could and did a truly magnificent job for the national side. Australia started to get noticed on the world stage and, perhaps, was why we could entice a manager like Terry Venables to these shores? That is my opinion.

Get the Farr Post

Dear Sir,

I was interested to read your article about fanzines in 'UK Stories' recently. As you say it's a shame there aren't more of them around, particularly so here in Australia, where they appear to be very thin on the ground. Anything that allows fans to have their say, encourage debate about the game, and provide an alternative to the official viewpoint is surely to be welcomed and encouraged. However, the concept seems to be very slow in catching on out here, with fanzines a relatively recent innovation and still seen as something of a novelty.

QUEENSLAND SOCCER FEDERATION

Only two are currently on the go: 'Studs Up' and 'The Farr Post'. The latter is from Queensland and has been around since October 1996. We've enclosed a copy for your perusal (it's not bad, Ed.).

Like our UK counterparts, we don't see eye-to-eye and don't toe the 'official' line.

In our case it is the Queensland Soccer Federation, and I think it's fair to say were are not exactly the flavour of the month down Perry Park way.

Still, that's the price to pay for printing anything that doesn't agree with the views espoused by the establishment. I think they would like to see us just quietly fade away.

And, like our UK counterparts 'The Farr Post' is here to stay.

Unlike them however, we haven't been able to get our hands on much in the way of profits! Soccer sponsorship, as I am sure you are aware of, is hard to find.

We struggle to shift 150-200 copies of each monthly issue, particularly when we are outside the Strikers' home games each second week, trying to persuade local fans to part with two dollars, which is trying when:

1: It rains
2: Strikers cop a hiding
3: Both!

The publication depends on a loyal number of enthusiastic contributors, of which we are eternally grateful.

In closing would it be possible to mention us in your first class, top quality, highly regarded publication (Grovel? Me??). This would help spread the word about 'The Farr Post'.

Keep up the good work at ABSW.

Tony Moran
Bulimba, QLD.

In This Issue . . .

Part II of the Peter Tokesi interview - An evening with Norman Whiteside - Ron the Ref - Strikers news and match reports - A Football Pilgrimage - News from the Shire of Farr - The QSF AGM - Return to Roots III - Harper Under Pressure - World Cup draw - . . and more !

Brownie Breaks N.S.L. goalscoring record (Story on page 6)

"Football's not a matter of life or death, it's much more important than that."
The late, great Bill Shankly.

STRIKERS

Preview Too Small

Dear Sir,

The National Basketball League is to relaunch its product by a national marketing plan and promotion of a star player profile.

The first strategy will raise awareness of interstate teams at local media level through advertising.

The second strategy will identify and publicise talented young players thus generating public interest. Soccer must adopt the same tactics as its the general lack of awareness of its product that results in poor attendances for interstate Ericsson Cup games.

Instead of writing about the thoughts of Chairman Hill and glamour coach Venables; publicise the young talented players through adequate previews of NSL games.

David Wood,
Glebe, NSW.

PS: Your current one paragraph "previews" are inadequate to entice and inform potential spectators.

Editor's note:

There are several reasons as to why certain areas are not covered in ABSW.

It is not a situation we are happy with but one we are obliged to defend at this time.

It will, hopefully, be resolved in the extreme near future and may I thank you for your observations.

David Hill

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Rising Stars

By Roy Hay

Southern Division

Albury Wodonga and South Melbourne Rockets played out a scoreless draw to open Round 19 after the resumption. The Rockets were playing for pride and Albury had four or five regulars out and though both sides got close to a goal on numerous occasions, the defences held out. Albury sweeper Nathan Ardern was the pick of the home team, while Brett Gilmour caught the eye in attack for the Rockets.

Bulleen beat South Melbourne by two goals to one at Bob Jane Stadium. The visitors took a two-nil lead in the first-half with one goal to Mathew Gulino after 15 minutes and an own-goal right at the start of the game. In the second half the Blues came back through Nick Marinos, but despite considerable pressure could not find an equaliser.

Gippsland Falcons hammered Heidelberg United by five goals to nil in the Latrobe Valley. Anthony Pardo scored the opening goal after nine minutes and John McEvoy scored two more, one midway through the first half and the second just after the restart. Luke Cheney made it four and substitute Alex Halikias completed the tally with five minutes left to play.

Pece Siveski scored the only goal of the Carlton versus VIS match which was played as curtain raiser to the Socceroos match with Chile earlier this month.

Northern Division

Christ Conti reports that the **ACTAS** and **AIS** played a very even game, the result was made sure by the AIS taking advantage of two opportunities to score while the ACTAS did not take advantage of their opportunities.

In a hectic opening to the game, both sides played very attractive, fast football and a number of chances fell to both sides, in fact the Academy's Stephen Lee had the ball in the back of the net but was adjudged offside. In the 21st minute a reckless challenge by Brent Chick in the Academy's penalty area gave Luke Wilkshire the chance to convert. He gave Barney Smith, playing his final game in Canberra before leaving for Brisbane, no chance with the penalty.

Minutes later at the other end Shane Lyons, who was giving the AIS defenders a tough time, was tackled in a similar manner in the AIS box but Lyons kept his feet and then lost the ball. In the final minute of the second half, following an Academy corner, Jimmy Baxter set up Oscar Zamora with a chance six yards out. Zamora blasted the ball at Michael Turnbull in the AIS goal, who miraculously deflected the ball for another corner.

The second-half was similar to the first with both teams delighting the crowd with constructive, flowing football, however, the local derby nature of the game became apparent and a number of fierce tackles went in and the referee, Ben Williams, was forced to dish out seven yellow cards — five to the AIS and two to the Academy.

In the 77th minute, Chris Tanchevski was on the end of an AIS move to slot the ball home and make the score 2-0 and the game safe for the AIS..

Sydney United beat its **Colts** side by eight goals to nil. Jason Culina was on target after two minutes, then Azur Mujanovic scored the first of his hat-trick in nine minutes. Mile Sterjovski weighed in with two goals, taking his tally for the season to 25 and Michael Santalab and Joel Griffiths added singles.

Wollongong City gained a creditable two-all home draw with **UTS Olympic**. Chad Bishop and Vic Costabile scored for the Wolves and Angelo Petratos and Jim Bakis for Olympic.

The **QAS** came back from a goal down to beat **Marconi Fairfield Colts** two-one at Marconi Stadium. Ryan Manente scored the only goal of the first-half played in very hot conditions at an understandably slow pace. In the second half both teams perked up as the weather cooled and Russell Miner with a penalty and Angelo Cootes scored for QAS. This was Miner's first game in attack and he led the line well, while Aaron Thiesfield, just back from a spell at the AIS, had an excellent game for the Queenslanders.

Marconi Youth beat **UTS Olympic Colts** by four goals to three. Mike Smith scored in 20 and 37 minutes for Marconi and Greg Collins and Vic Tomasevic added goals in the second half. The Olympic Colts' scorers were not available at time of writing.

Round 20

Southern Division

Saturday 28 February 1998

Heidelberg United v South Melbourne (4pm, Olympic Village)

Sunday 1 March 1998

Bentleigh Greens v Altona Magic (4pm, Kingston Heath)
South Melbourne Rockets v VIS (5pm, Bob Jane Stadium)
Albury Wodonga v Gippsland Falcons (4pm, Diamond Park)
Melbourne Knights v Carlton (3.30pm, Knights Stadium)
Bulleen have a bye

Northern Division

Friday 27 February 1998

Newcastle Breakers v Sydney United (5pm, Topper Stadium)

Saturday 28 February 1998

Marconi Fairfield v Wollongong City (4.30 pm, Marconi Stadium)
QAS v AIS (4.30 pm, Suncorp Stadium)

Sunday 1 March 1998

Sydney United Colts v Marconi Fairfield Colts
(5.30 pm, Sydney United Sports Stadium)

Monday 2 March 1998

ACTAS v NSWIS (5 pm, Seiffert Oval)
UTS Olympic and UTS Olympic Colts have byes.

JOHN WARREN FOR RETIREMENT?

Dear Sir,

As a passionate follower of soccer, I also listen and read anything that is connected with the game, especially ABSW.

The comments made by John Warren recently, commentating during the game between Australia and Japan, made me sick.

Also his past remarks about the Soccer's Head of Australian Institute of Sport, Ron Smith, Frank Farina, and, more recently Terry Venables, plus his constant advice to everyone about which direction Australian soccer should take, are slowly turning into arrogance.

The last comment he made was that had Milan Ivanovic have played in the two games against Iran, we would have qualified for France!

Comments like this not only insult every player and official connected with that squad, but is also a disgrace to his position. In fact to make it more boring, he repeated it twice.

Mr Warren, let me outline you some facts. In the last three international games, Milan Ivanovic played in two, one against Chile, which we lost, and one against Japan which we also lost. The one game he did not play in was against South Korea, which in fact we won.

The point is, if you did not know it, every team member is equally important and individually, nobody wins matches. With respect to Milan Ivanovic I feel that Mr Warren's past and present comments are not doing any favours to the game and he should consider retirement.

Why not involve younger talent with broader vision in this role for everyone's benefit (Charlie Yankos, Paul Wade, Andy Harper, Branko Culina etc.)?

Paul Howard,
Melbourne, Vic.

John Warren

Editor's note: Much as it appears that you are earnest in your opinions, several areas need looking at in your letter. Firstly, Johnnie Warren is a well- respected soccer journalist and former international player in Australia. He is entitled to his opinion, just as we all are. ABSW cannot answer your questions, as it really is a matter for Mr Warren to do so and, in this respect, we offer him the opportunity to respond, if he so wishes, via these pages, or directly, at his leisure. Many thanks for your comments.

Southern Division

Albury Wodonga	0	Sth Mel Rockets	0
Gippsland F	5	Heidelberg Utd	0
McEvoy 2, Halikias, Pardo, Cheney			
Sth Melbourne	1	Bulleen Inter	2
Marinos		Gulino og	
Carlton	1	VIS	0
Siveski			

Bentleigh Greens, Altona Magic, Melbourne Knights - Byes

Northern Division

UTS Colts	3	Marconi Fairfield	4
n/a		Smith 2, Collins, Tomasevic	
AIS	2	ACTAS	0
Wilkshire, Tanchevski			
Sydney United	8	Syd Utd Colts	0
Mujanovic 3, Sterjovski 2, Griffiths, Santalab, Culina			
Wollongong City	2	UTS Olympic	2
Bishop, Costabile		Petratos, Bakis	
Marconi Colts	1	QAS	2
Manente		Miner, Cootes	

Southern Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mel Knights	15	13	0	2	66	15	39
Carlton	14	13	0	1	31	6	39
Gippsland	15	10	2	3	32	14	32
Bulleen	15	8	2	5	26	20	26
VIS	14	7	3	4	33	17	24
Bentleigh	15	5	2	8	17	30	17
Albury	15	4	2	9	18	21	14
Heidelberg	15	4	2	9	16	39	14
Sth Mel	15	3	3	9	29	26	12
Altona	14	3	2	9	18	50	11
SM Rockets	15	1	2	12	13	61	5

Northern Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AIS	16	12	2	2	63	13	38
UTS Olympic	16	9	4	3	52	24	31
Wollongong	17	8	4	5	34	33	28
Sydney Utd	16	7	6	3	48	29	27
Marconi	16	8	2	6	32	31	26
QAS	16	7	4	5	36	22	25
Newcastle	15	5	5	5	35	31	20
Marc Colts	16	6	2	8	25	38	20
ACTAS	16	5	4	7	21	44	19
Oly Colts	17	3	3	11	26	60	12
SU Colts	15	3	2	10	16	45	11
NSWIS	16	2	4	10	19	37	10

Leading Goal Scorers

Southern Division

Adis Kablar	Melbourne Knights	13
John Kalabric	Melbourne Knights	12
Zoran Petrevski	VIS	12
J Novacevski	Carlton	9
Festim Zekiri	Melbourne Knights	7

Northern Division

Mile Sterjovski	AIS/Sydney United	25
Mark Hagger	Marconi Fairfield Colts	17
Joe Bruni	Marconi Fairfield	10
Nick Carle	UTS Olympic	10
Chris Tanchevski	Newcastle Breakers/AIS	10
Marc Bresciano	AIS	9

ERICSSON CUP Match Reports

THREE RED CARDS SINK UNITED

SYDNEY UNITED.....0 MELBOURNE KNIGHTS.....3

By John Economos

Three red cards (all to Sydney United) and three goals (all to the Melbourne Knights) almost summed up the events last Sunday night at the Parramatta Stadium in front of a paltry crowd of 2,477.

Referee Mark Shields marched off right-back David Barrett (57th minute), sweeper Richard Plesa (66th) and central marker Velimir Kupresak (81st) that left United in tatters to finish the match with just seven field players.

Ironically it was United that trailed by one goal at the break when in fact they should have led by two, if not three, as the home team was on fire.

However some poor finishing denied the previously joint-League leaders urgently needed goals, not only to take the points, but to have had some form of cushion in the second-half to defend with when they lost their three players to the colour red.

A magnificent flat through-ball in the 22nd minute by lanky midfield captain Paul Bilokapic fed to his striker Abbas Saad just behind marker Ransford Banini, saw the Knights' goalkeeper Joe Didulica quickly race off his line to smother Saad's point blank shot.

Three minutes later Saad returned the compliment to Bilokapic but the latter's final effort from the left shaved the base of the far post.

United's powerful right-back Davie Barrett swung a long and high cross into the box that dropped perilously just wide of the top right hand corner of the target.

Five minutes from the break the Knights opened their account courtesy of a clever pass from right midfielder Ante Deak to his marksman Ivan Kelic. Kelic calculatingly clipped a delicate ball over the advanced and outstretched body of goalkeeper Zeljko Kalac.

A minute from half-time Kelic was going in for his second with a right-footed shot at the frame, but the very well positioned Kalac made an excellent save down low.

Three minutes into the second-half the quick thinking central midfielder, John Didulica, broke through and managed to pull Kalac well outside his box, but with nobody 'home' Didulica's long chip went just wide of the frame.

Barrett in the 57th minute, whilst being heavily impeded by the shirt grabbing Tommy Pondeljak, swung back an elbow that instantly earned Barrett the wrath of the ref as well as a red card.

The explosively paced Pondeljak was back in full action in the 61st minute with an extremely determined raid down the right.

First he easily sliced past a desperate Richard Plesa before driving hard and low into the far corner to double the Knights scoreline.

Kalac again denied the Knights a minute later from an effort by Deak but was unable to stop the penalty in the 66th minute fired in by Pondeljak after Plesa became the second United player sent-off for his fouling of giant striker Kelic well inside the box.

With just nine minutes left, United suffered further humiliation by losing a third player through a red card. A short corner by the Knights fired in from the left, saw both United's Velimir Kupresak and substitute Ice Kutlesovski go up for the ball, which both failed to connect with, as it went out of play.

A split-second later, Kupresak was caught retaliating to some sledging as he reeled around at Kutlesovski with referee Shields flashing the red to the veteran and classy marker.

Best performers for the Knights were double-scorer Pondeljak, right midfielder Ante Deak with central midfielder John Didulica, whilst for United giant goalkeeper Kalac denied the enemy three more goals, with right midfielder Marcus Phillips and left-back Peter Bennett always industrious.

A very disappointed United coach David Mitchell later lamented: "We didn't deserve all this as we played outstanding Soccer in the first session in which we should have sewn it all up. Two of the red cards issued I believe were very harsh decisions.

"In the second half it all became a lottery and we just tried to consolidate in not to lose by more goals."

PUMAS: Kalac, Barrett, Kupresak, Plesa, Vrkic, Bennett, Phillips, Bilokapic (Burns 67), Hooker, Saad, Bosevski (Jerman 71).

KNIGHTS: Joe Didulica, Jolic, Banini (Nastevski 51), Davidson, Kovacevic (Markovski 74), Rajher, Deak (Kutlesovski 74), John Didulica, Susa, Kelic, Pondeljak.

SCORERS
Knights: Kelic 40, Pondeljak 61,66p

CROWD: 2,477

POY
3 Pondeljak (MK)
2 Kalac (SU)
1 Deak (MK)

KOSTA DOES IT AGAIN

WOLLONGONG CITY .....3 SYDNEY OLYMPIC.....2

By Phil Murphy

Wollongong Wolves came from behind to beat Sydney Olympic 3-2 at Brandon Park on Sunday night and striker Kosta Salapasidis was again the toast of Wolves fans.

On loan from Adelaide City for the rest of the season, Salapasidis scored two of the goals after his gem in a 2-1 win over South Korea a week earlier.

It was the first time Wollongong had come from behind to win this season and the three points have lifted them to fourth place on the ladder.

After a slow-motion first half, Olympic led 2-1, but the action came thick and fast after the break, Wollongong scored two brilliant goals, Tony Perinich showing great close skills to beat three defenders before placing the ball out of the reach of goalkeeper Bob Catlin.

That made it 2-2 with 20 minutes to go.

That was when the home team carved out a fine move involving Perinich and Anthony Surjan, who set up Salapasidis to score the winner.

Salapasidis put the ball away after Surjan got in a cross from the right and Olympic failed to get the ball clear.

In the five minutes before half-time, Wollongong appeared to relax at the back with Norman Tome and Brett Emerton making the most of the situation to score goals.

After the Wolves hit the front, David Huxley hammered a shot onto the Olympic crossbar then replacement Eric Hristodoulou did the same thing from 30m at the other end.

Huxley had an unusual game. He was carried off on a stretcher with an ankle injury after just four minutes but returned after treatment to win the Wolves Man-of-the-Match award.

Wollongong's superior fitness was a factor in their win, but Olympic coach John Sentas said he was pleased with his team's performance.

He said Wollongong created more chances but Olympic never gave up and deserved a point. Wolves coach Nick Theodarakopoulos wasn't unduly concerned to be behind at half-time. He said he felt it was a reaction after a tough midweek game in Adelaide.

"I was relaxed and felt we were playing well enough to win" he said.

"Obviously I was concerned at the way we opened up to allow Olympic to score their goals and that seems to be an ongoing thing.

"Fortunately, we will have Alvin Ceccoli back from suspension to play against Marconi."

King Kosta...Wolves fans love their new signing.

WOLVES: Hughes, Stanton, Connolly, Horsley, Surjan, Chipperfield, Souris, Perinich, Huxley (Younis 90), Masi (Dimoski 82), Salapasidis (Spencer 89).

OLYMPIC: Catlin, Ciantar, Juric, Baillie, Tome, Tsekenis, Emerton, Kalantzis (Augerinos 45), Ardone (Hristodoulou 69), Rastall, N. Carle (L. Carle 88).

CROWD: 6,631

SCORERS
Wolves: Salapasidis 22, 77, Perinich 70
Olympic: Tome 40, Emerton 45

POY
3 Surjan (WC)
2 Huxley (WC)
1 Baillie (SO)

'TRAJ'S' STUNNER 'TRAJEDY' FOR COSMOS

ADELAIDE CITY .....4 CANBERRA COSMOS 1

By Val Migliaccio

Zebra super-sub Kris Trajanovski helped Adelaide City score a flattering 4-1 victory over Canberra Cosmos at Hindmarsh Stadium on Sunday.

He was rested on the bench after a gruelling four matches in ten days. Zebra coach John Nyskohus brought on Trajanovski in the 63rd minute after Canberra had dominated with the score locked in at 1-1. The substitution saw the Zebras lift and to top off a fine night for Trajanovski, he scored with a brilliant top left hand corner net buster in the 92nd minute to seal the Zebras fourth goal.

City started where they left off on Wednesday night against Wollongong, and immediately asserted their dominance with fine possession football.

It took only three minutes before the deadlock was broken after a great passage of play. Brad Hassell released Angelo Costanozo down the right flank, who fired in the perfect cross for the league's top goalscorer Damian Mori to angle in a header from six metres for a 1-0 lead.

After the initial shock of the goal the Cosmos slowly started to gain the upper-hand with Ante Moric controlling the midfield with great support from Andrew Ravenello and Norman Kelly.

The Cosmos equalised in the 19th minute with Peter Buljan finishing with inch perfect precision involving Dale Wingell and Ravanello, with Buljan threading the ball through the eye of a needle from eight metres past City custodian Jason Petkovic to level the tie.

From that point the Cosmos showed more initiative and played some fine soccer in the middle of the park, dominating proceedings with Paul Dee being involved in Canberra's attacking forays.

The match changed in the 65th minute when Zebra defender Mark Yates took a long throw in aimed at the six yard box. Cosmos keeper Tony Giannasca lost sight of the ball and Dino Mennillo forced the ball over the line to make it 2-1.

The Cosmos custodian Giannasca was furious with the goal and protested to referee Brett Hugo but without success.

Canberra still, played great football and substitute Ilija Prenzoski had Petkovic scampering to make a save in the 79th minute after a great half-volley.

Four minutes later that man Mori scored his second with a great assist by Michael Brooks. Mori made some space on the edge of the box and fired in a right-foot drive which powered into the top left hand corner of the net for 3-1.

Not to be outdone Trajanovski settled the points for the Zebras, scoring one of the most spectacular goals you will ever see, when he latched onto a loose ball 25 metres out and smashed it into the top left hand corner of the net with a fantastic left-foot half-volley. It was one of the sweetest shots you will ever see in the A-league, with the ball echoing throughout the Hindmarsh Stadium.

Zebra assistant-coach Joe Mullen said after the match. "The 4-1 scoreline perhaps flattered us, and Canberra looked very good for 40 minutes. Three of our goals tonight were absolutely brilliant."

ZEBRAS: Petkovic, Yates, Ivanovic, Tobin, Costanzo (Brazzale 88), Mori, Hassell (Trajanovski 63), Mennillo (Pirone 77), Gibson, Brooks, Thomas.

COSMOS: Giannasca, Dee, Ravanello (Roberts 79), Moric (Wilson 70), Hunter, Kelly, James (Prenzoski 75), Buljan, Wingell, Popovich, Haythornthwaite.

SCORERS
City: Mori 3,83, Mennillo 65, Trajanovski 92.
Cosmos: Buljan 19.

CROWD: 3,800

POY
3 Ivanovic (AC)
2 Costanzo (AC)
1 Moric (CC).

ERICSSON CUP

Results Round Nineteen

Adelaide City	4	Wollongong City	2	Gippsland Falcons	0	Adelaide Sharks	0
Perth Glory	3	Newcastle Breakers	4	South Melbourne	3	Marconi Fairfield	1
Wollongong City	3	UTS Olympic	2	Sydney United	0	Melbourne Knights	3
Adelaide City	4	Canberra Cosmos	1	Carlton SC	1	Brisbane Strikers	1

Round Twenty Fixtures

Odds courtesy of SportOdds

To Win League						To Win League
--	3.25	Newcastle Breakers	3.50	Sydney United	2.00	5.00
23.00	2.35	Marconi Fairfield	3.25	Wollongong City	2.65	--
101.00	3.25	Brisbane Strikers	3.50	Adelaide City	1.90	3.00
51.00	2.25	Melbourne Knights	3.25	Carlton SC	2.75	19.00
--	2.75	UTS Olympic	3.25	Perth Glory	2.25	15.00
251.00	3.00	Adelaide Sharks	3.25	South Melbourne	2.00	2.25
--	2.30	Canberra Cosmos	3.25	Gippsland Falcons	2.70	201.00
--	1.50	Adelaide City	3.75	Melbourne Knights	5.50	--

1998 WORLD CUP

Brazil	4.00
France	7.00
England	8.00
Germany	8.00
Holland	9.00
Italy	9.00
Argentina	13.00
Spain	16.00
Yugoslavia	23.00
Croatia	26.00
Nigeria	29.00
Romania	29.00
Denmark	34.00
Colombia	41.00
Norway	41.00
Bulgaria	51.00
Paraguay	51.00
Belgium	61.00
Austria	91.00
Cameroon	101.00
Chile	126.00
Mexico	126.00
Scotland	141.00
Morocco	151.00
Sth Africa	201.00
Sth Korea	201.00
USA	201.00
Jamaica	251.00
Saudi Arabia	251.00
Japan	401.00
Tunisia	401.00
Iran	401.00

ERICSSON CUP LEADING SCORERS

16	**Damian Mori**	**Adelaide City**
13	**Pablo Cardozo**	**Adelaide Sharks**
12	Scott Chipperfield	Wollongong City
10	Paul Trimboli	South Melbourne
10	Norm Tome	Sydney Olympic
9	Tom Pondeljak	Melbourne Knights
8	Abbas Saad	Sydney United
8	Peter Buljan	Canberra Cosmos
8	John Anastasiadis	South Melbourne
7	Brad Maloney	Marconi Fairfield
7	Clayton Zane	Newcastle Breakers
7	Anthony Surjan	Wollongong City
5	David Mitchell	Sydney United

ERICSSON CUP TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Melbourne	19	11	6	2	46	26	39
Sydney United	19	10	6	3	29	16	36
Adelaide City	18	11	2	5	37	20	35
Wollongong City	19	10	1	8	41	24	31
Carlton	19	7	9	3	23	17	30
Marconi Fairfield	19	8	4	7	23	24	28
Perth Glory	19	8	4	7	26	29	28
Melbourne Knights	18	7	5	6	25	21	26
Gippsland Falcons	19	6	6	7	18	23	24
Adelaide Sharks	19	6	4	10	23	29	22
UTS Olympic	19	6	3	10	24	36	21
Brisbane Strikers	19	6	1	12	17	28	19
Canberra Cosmos	19	3	6	10	21	40	15
Newcastle Breakers	19	2	5	12	22	42	11

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Round 20 Preview

By Stuart Jones

Newcastle v Sydney United

Newcastle's home record reads one win, two draws and six losses, with United's away record of six wins two draws and the one loss. Earlier this season United defeated the Breakers 2-0 at Parramatta Stadium whilst last season at Topper Stadium the score was 3-1 to the home side. Newcastle fans will be looking for a similar score this time around.

Prediction: Sydney United

Marconi v Wollongong

Marconi have lost only twice at home this season — to Carlton and Perth. Earlier this season they lost 5-1 away at Wollongong whilst last year the head-to-head saw one game won apiece, Marconi losing 3-2 away but winning 2-0 at home. The Stallions will be hoping that they can turn the result around again this season.

Prediction: Draw

Canberra v Gippsland

Canberra will be hoping this season the result will not be like last year. Last season Gippsland won the game 4-2 at Bruce Stadium. In Victoria the match between the two sides ended goalless. Canberra's home record is three wins two draws and two losses, but Falcons have won three games away from home. It should be a tight affair.

Prediction: Gippsland

Brisbane v Adelaide City

Adelaide City have come out on top four times in the eight times they have travelled this season, while Strikers have won only three of their nine home games. Brisbane lost this game 3-1 last year, and Adelaide City beat the Strikers 1-0 at home this season. It all points to the Zebras, but Farina's men want to prove a few people wrong.

Prediction: Brisbane Strikers

Melbourne Knights v Carlton

This Melbourne derby ended in a draw first time around at Optus Oval. Now is the return clash and the game shapes up as a must-win for the Knights. Their home form has been quite good this season, winning four, drawing two of eight games. However, on their travels, Carlton have only lost the once.

Prediction: Knights

UTS Olympic v Perth

Perth's away record is actually better than their home record. With all the turmoil Olympic have seen over the last two months it is more likely that Perth will repeat their 1-0 success of earlier this season. Olympic will be looking for revenge for that defeat and the 2-0 loss suffered at the hands of Glory at home last season.

Prediction: Perth Glory

Adelaide Sharks v South Melbourne

The Sharks have the third best home record in the league. However at the mid-season break their away record was the worst of any of the fourteen sides.

South Melbourne put them to the sword at Lakeside in Round Six with four goals answered by only one. Last year this game ended 2-0 to South Melbourne. It will be a tough match for both sides.

Prediction: South Melbourne

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ERICSSON CUP

Match Reports

SOUTH LOOKING OMINOUS

SOUTH MELBOURNE.....3 MARCONI FAIRFIELD.....1

By Dwyght Tuffnell

South Melbourne displayed championship form, disposing of Marconi Fairfield 3-1 at Bob Jane Stadium on Sunday.

South looked sharp after the three week break, running all over Marconi in the second-half after a tight first period.

John Anastasiadis once again proved his value playing up front, notching another two goals to take his season tally to eight.

Goran Lozanovski, David Clarkson and Fausto De Amicis, amongst a host of others, were all outstanding, in periods, for South with only Zoric and Korean import Kim Pan-Keun worthwhile contributors to the Marconi cause.

Coach Ange Postecoglou still thinks that his team can improve and said: "Hopefully around Finals time, we'll be peaking."

South initially found it hard to break down a re-shuffled Marconi defence.

The Stallions had lost Socceroo defender Mark Babic after just nine minutes with injury, replaced by Chad Gibson.

Attempts from Lozanovski and Michael Curcija didn't threaten Ante Covic in Marconi's goal early on.

But a trademark South Melbourne build up produced the opening goal after 37 minutes.

Skipper Paul Trimboli, who didn't have his best game of the season, found Lozanovski on the right.

Lozanovski's cross was flicked on by Clarkson right to the feet of Anastasiadis to poke the ball past Covic.

But six minutes after half-time, Marconi struck an equaliser with their first meaningful shot on target.

Darren McDonald passed to Zoric inside the area and with time and space, he picked his spot to beat Michael Petkovic with a low right foot shot.

South were ahead again just seven minutes later.

Anastasiadis held the ball up and laid it off for midfielder Steve Panopoulos, whose shot from the edge of the box rolled past Covic.

South Melbourne then turned on the style with some neat passing and flowing, attractive football.

The locals scored a third goal with fifteen minutes to go.

Trimboli played a terrific through ball to Anastasiadis, who was too quick for Luke Casserly, Dominic Longo and Covic, as he raced around them all before slotting into an empty net.

And he nearly got his second hat-trick of the year, but headed into the side netting from a Con Boutsianis cross.

Postecoglou admitted that he was worried that the side might be a bit rusty after the break.

"It was a bit of a danger game for us. The players were going to take some time to find fluency again after the three week lay-off.

"We didn't have our normal fluency in the first-half, but worked hard defensively.

John Anastasiadis: Has now scored eight times for the rampant Souths.

"But in the second-half we struck a bit of form we had before the break and got the rewards for the hard work."

Postecoglou said it was hard work in the first-half, breaking down the stacked Marconi defence and midfield.

"The way they shaped up they looked like they were going to sit back and hit us on the break.

"Once we scored the first goal it made it difficult for them because they had to change things."

He also said that having such a strong squad ensured that there would be no complacency within the team approaching the finals.

"Knowing that guys like Bill Damianos and Tansel Baser, who have played all season, have to come back keeps all the players on their toes.

SOUTH: Petkovic, Iosifidis, De Amicis, Orlic, Blatsis, Clarkson, Panopoulos, Trimboli, Curcija (Boutsianis 69), Lozanovski (Coveny 67), Anastasiadis (Goutzioulis 84)

STALLIONS: Covic, M.Babic (Gibson 9), Longo, Casserly (Souris 80), Care, McDonald (Tomich 85), Maloney, Z.Babic, Awaritefe, Kim, Zoric.

Scorers
South:Anastasiadis 37,75
Panopoulos 58
Stallions: Zoric 51

CROWD: 7,000 (Approx)

POY
3 Anastasiadis (SM)
2 Clarkson (SM)
1 Kim (MF)

THE KIDS STUN GLORY

PERTH GLORY .....3 NEWCASTLE BREAKERS 4

By Richard Kreider

Home ground advantage is a fallacy, just ask the Perth Glory players who are beginning to wonder what it takes to win at home, following their shock loss to bottom side Newcastle Breakers last Sunday.

The 4-3 defeat, which contained a hat-trick by Ericsson Cup newcomer Reece Tollenaere, enabled the Breakers to finally end a record 17 game losing streak, and secure only their second win of the season.

The other match winner for the Breakers was undoubtedly their 18-year old goalkeeper Brad Swancott, who made some remarkable saves, including a breathtaking point-blank stop by striker Scott Halpin, and a 42nd minute penalty from Socceroo Ernie Tapai.

But coach Gary Marocchi preferred to point the finger at his charges rather than attribute the loss to the performance of the opposition's goalkeeper.

"We had the opportunities to win the game, and they were easy ones, but if you don't take them then obviously it is not going to go your way," he said.

"We got into a very bad habit of losing, and it was very hard to change it around." said Newcastle coach John Kosmina.

"Even in the second-half we nearly gave it away again, but this time we finally got the breaks and were able to find the net ourselves. We came over on Friday to give us plenty of time to prepare for the game and it helped, as it did the last time," noted Kosmina. The Breakers defeated Perth 2-0 in the corresponding match last season.

Vas Kalogeracos celebrated his return to Perth Oval by opening the scoring after just three minutes, but that was to become his only chance on goal for the remainder of the half. Clayton Zane set-up Tollenaere to equalise four minutes later only to sustain a groin injury in the process which forced him out of the game in the 32nd minute, but not before Mathew Austin and Leo Langone combined to allow Tollenaere to put Newcastle ahead in the 14th minute.

Marocchi exchanged Tapai and Tony Cabone with Paul Strudwick and Peter Vukmirovic, at the start of the second-half, to counteract the potency of the visitors' strike-force, which had the desired effect as Scott Halpin found the net in the 60th and 70th minutes.

But just when a draw seemed the likely result, especially with Swancott continuing to repel everything Glory were throwing at his goal, Tollenaere silenced the 13,228 crowd four minutes from time by directing a Doug West centre past Anthony Franken for his triple.

What an incredible result for the battling Breakers.

FOOTNOTE:

All is not well in WA it appears. Coach Gary Marocchi substituted Ernie Tapai during the half-time break and replaced him with Paul Strudwick. With this, Four Nations 'Man of the Series' Tapai packed his bags and went home. It is reported that Tapai and Coach Marocchi were involved in a heated exchange at the interval, so Tapai decided to avoid any further confrontation, something that has happened more than once since the Aussie international landed in Perth. Worse news for Glory, they have not won a game at Perth Oval since December 7.

Reece Tollenaere: Newcastle's hat-trick saviour.

GLORY: Franken, Wilkinson, Naven, S. Miller, E. TAPAI (Strudwick 46), Afkos (McVitte 51), S. Halpin, Hay, Carbone (Vukmirovic 46), T. Halpin, Kalogeracos.

BREAKERS: Swancott, Sprod, Austin, Pryce, McManus, Ironside, Zane (McGuire 32) (Wilson 82), Tollenaere, Bennett (Lowe 63), West, Langone.

SCORERS
Breakers: Tollenaere 7,14,86, Pryce 24p
Glory: Kalogeracos 3, S. Halpin 60, 70.

CROWD: 13,228

POY
3 Tollenaere (NB)
2 T. Halpin (PG)
1 Tollenaere (NB)

SHARKS / FALCONS IN 'ORDINARY' SHOW

GIPPSLAND FALCONS.....0 ADELAIDE SHARKS.....0

By Damian Tripodi

The nil-all scoreline virtually tells the story of Sunday's lacklustre game at Falcons Park.

Of course some excuses can be made due to the weather conditions and the fact that both sides lacked match practice, however, it was amazing to see two teams, both in the hunt for a place in the Top Six, perform so poorly.

In a scrappy, unattractive game on a windswept Falcons Park, both contestants lacked fluency and the desperation required to be able to move up the ladder in order to fulfil their aspirations for a finals berth.

The powerful, unforgiving wind deprived the home side from demonstrating the skills and momentum which they have shown in recent encounters at Falcons Park. Nevertheless, the Falcons clearly began the better and had the ascendency over the Sharks for most of the 90 minutes.

The Falcons forwards, although clearly the winners over their opponents, were unable to finish the chances.

An encouraging factor of the game for the Gippslanders, was that the young brigade, led by Joe Tricarico, Archie Thompson, Clayton Bell and Lev Osman, clearly had the edge over their more experienced opponents.

Adelaide's noted force, led by the likes of Alex Kuzmanovic, Jose Iriarte and Frank Tibaldi, were held back by the unlucky, but vehement, Falcons.

The Falcons virtually blew their chances of a win in the first-half when three clear opportunities went begging. Firstly, in the 8th minute, following a good ball from Joe Tricarico, Archie Thompson's shot just missed the cross bar.

Ten minutes later a through ball by Doug Marcina, eminating from midfield, fell invitingly to Thompson who, perhaps, acted too quickly as he had time to control, and consequently his shot was saved by Sharks goalkeeper, David Miller.

In the 35th minute, in clearly what was the best chance of the game, the Falcons should have taken the lead. A pinpoint cross from Archie Thompson found his target in Zlatko Mihajlovic who, with time and room to spare and no marker and with Miller out of place, sent the ball over the bar.

The Falcons maintained their edge over the Sharks for the rest of the half but, again, the goals were to elude them.

At the beginning of the second-half, Sharks coach Adrian Santac made some positional changes and brought in Richie Alagich in place of John Cutillo. The move had a sudden impact and for the next ten to 15 minutes the South Australians lifted their game.

The only real chance for the visitors presented itself late in the game when Frank Tibaldi set up substitute Andrew Borghetto. As Borghetto controlled and was readied to shoot towards goal, the flamboyant Tony Sekulic, who today was sporting a multi-coloured hairstyle, miraculously managed to get a foot to the ball and save the day for the Falcons.

At the end of the game both coaches agreed their teams lacked fluency and the game was difficult under the conditions.

Falcons coach Arok stated his team struggled for the 90 minutes: "Everything worked against us", stated Arok.

"We lacked the fluency and momentum that we had in the past weeks and injuries and suspensions clearly worked against us. We should have won the game in the first-half but failed to capitalise. It is important that we get results in the next two weeks. We are now on 24 points whilst this time last year we were on 14. We have a long way to go but we can still do it."

His South Australian counterpart, Adrian Santac, stated that bad weather conditions, lack of fluency and lack of match practice contributed to his team's "ordinary" performance.

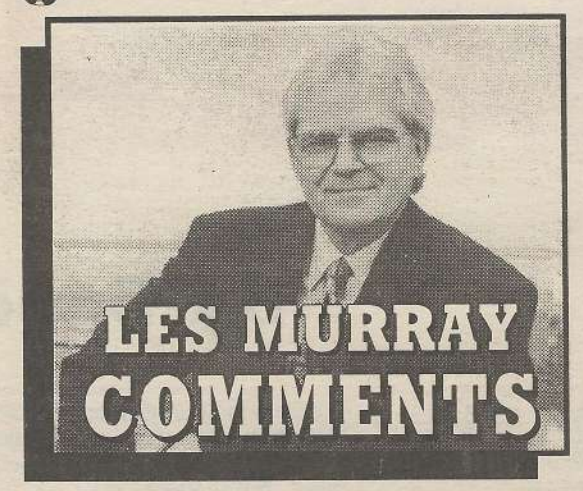
Santac also agreed that his team was lucky not to have gone behind in the first-half.

FALCONS: Kourtis, Sekulic, Marcina, Palamara (Byrne 84), Tsaltas (Foy 62), Hastie, Tricarico, Osman, Bell Thompson, Mihajlovic (MacNicol 58).

SHARKS: Miller, Castro, Tibaldi, Kuzmanovic, Milosevic, Kokkinoplitis, Iriarte (Borghetto 70), Cutillo (Alagich 46), Hristodoulou, Misalidis, Duric.

CROWD: 2,620

POY:
3 Joe Tricarico (GF)
2 Archie Thompson (GF)
1 David Miller (AS)



Terry Venables flew out of Sydney's Mascot Airport last Thursday. With that you might think this will be the last word on El Tel. I hope it is not. I hope he can remain a part of our game. I hope all the hype and money that has been invested in him over the past year and a half will be rewarded.

As he left, Venables had in his pocket an offer from Soccer Australia to stay on for another four years. He left without giving his answer. He wanted to go home to England and consider his other options before deciding. Let's hope he does his considering quickly. We, Australian soccer, have to get on with our lives.

As someone who has been critical of Soccer Australia in this whole affair, for the homage they paid to Venables and played entirely on his terms, must now give credit. The offer made to Venables, one where he was to be 'El Supremo' of both senior Socceroos and the Olympic team, where he was to manage Australia's Sydney 2000 campaign, was the right offer. Such a job would keep El Tel very active at the apex of Australian soccer continuously for the next four years. Presumably full-time. And that's where we want him.

Such a job would keep Venables focussed on Australian soccer's future, not its present. My impression of Venables, over the past 14 months that I have known and studied his work, has been that he is essentially a club coach. He has a sharp sense for assessing the abilities of his own players and for reading the immediate opposition.

But he has not been a big picture man. He has not laid the foundations for our long-term future and he didn't seem particularly to care. And, you would justifiably ask, why should he? He was on a short-term contract. charged only with taking us to the World Cup. Soccer Australia, in their ignorance of what was, in broad terms, really at stake, took the expedient step and gave him a one-mission job. He was not to be blamed for that.

Now, I suspect, Soccer Australia is beginning to see the light. They are beginning to see that, as a developing soccer nation, we have an agenda that is wider than one game and one tournament, even if that tournament is the World Cup itself.

Could it be that Soccer Australia is actually beginning to believe that the Sydney 2000 football tournament is important, and even crucial, in the game's development? Which, of course, it is. In our particular place in international football, the only way to keep soccer's profile high over the next couple of years is to focus on the Olyroos, to harness the population's preoccupation with the 2000 Olympics.

All that, whether Venables accepts the job offer or not, begins with a series between the Olyroos and Brazil next month. What a tantalising affair that is. We'll have a real chance to look over the players that will represent us in the Olympics and many of whom will be in the team that will fight for a place in the 2002 World Cup. And there are some real exciting prospects that will be on view.

Brett Emerton, Con Blatsis, Christian Care, Nick Carle, Jason Culina, Vince Grella, Archie Thompson, Jacob Burns, Kasey Wehrman — all such gifted, exciting young players. All players who should be regular fixtures in the NSL, but not all of whom are, thanks to some less than brave coaches unwilling to take risks by promoting young players.

And, of course, part of next month's excitement will be that Brazil will be in the same boat. They too will be looking at their crystal ball, sizing up the kids that may win them their first Olympic Gold Medal and take them to the next World Cup, plausibly their sixth World Cup victory.

And I wouldn't even dream of starting to rattle off the names of the young players they will bring with them. For it matters little. Brazil is so well researched in young playing talent, nobody really cares what names appear on their team-sheet.

ERICSSON CUP
Match Reports

ZEBRAS TOPPLE WOLVES

ADELAIDE CITY .....4 WOLLONGONG CITY 2

By Val Migliaccio

Soccer fans were treated to a spectacular goal feast at Hindmarsh Stadium when Adelaide City defeated Wollongong City 4-2.

The match played last Wednesday was the deferred round one clash on a night which saw the two leading marksmen of the A-league: the Zebras' Damian Mori and Wolves' Scott Chipperfield score a brace each.

The match had all the ingredients for a nail biter with the third placed Zebras poised just one point ahead of fifth placed Wolves before the clash. In the space of 33 minutes of the first half five goals were scored with the Zebras leading 3-2.

Surely both sides must be definite finals contenders with Zebras able to step up the tempo, when required, and the Wolves one of the most entertaining sides ever to grace Adelaide this season.

It took just three minutes for the Zebras to record their first goal when Dino Mennillo, one of the best dead-ball experts in the league, fired in an out-swinging corner which was met by Alex Tobin, who turned in the box and shot from ten metres and Damian Mori put the final touch on the ball into the back of the net.

The Wolves had their first shot of the evening in the 14th minute when David Huxley powered a thunderbolt towards goal after some great lead up work by Scott Chipperfield.

In the 19th minute Man-of-the-Match John Gibson bravely headed clear the Wolves danger after some great work by Chipperfield on the left.

A minute later another Mennillo corner found Brad Hassell on the edge of the six-yard box but the Wolves cleared his powerful header off the goal-line.

In the 21st minute Mori broke into the penalty box, was appeared to be held by the shirt and brought down, but referee Wayne Dade waved play on.

The Wolves were level in the 22nd minute when Alvin Ceccoli made his way down the left and fired in a great cross to Chipperfield, who angled a great header past Jason Petkovic.

As soon as Adelaide fans had settled down after the Wolves equaliser in the 23rd minute. Mark Yates crossed the ball in the box which was flicked in by Mori to the far post and Mennillo converted at full stretch for the 2-1 lead.

Four minutes later Ceccoli split the Zebra defence with a great ball to Tony Perinich on the left, who chipped the ball over the advancing Petkovic for Chipperfield to slot his second of the night to level the tie at 2-2.

In the 33rd minute a great assist by Zebra striker Michael Brooks saw his through-ball from the half-way line release Mori who chipped the ball over Wolves keeper Adam Brodbeck from 25 metres, the ball seemed to take an eternity before it bounced into the back of an open net. The score was 3-2 and there seemed to be no letting up on the goalscoring as both sides openly attacked.

John Gibson: 'Man-of-the-Match' performance.

The Zebras escaped from an equaliser in the 45th minute when Gibson saved a powerful shot from 18 metres by Esala Masi on the line.

The second-half opened as brightly as the first when, in the 48th minute, a quick thinking Mori free-kick released Mennillo who watched his angled drive hit the side netting from eight metres.

A minute later Mark Yates, 26, capped off a fine night when he scored his very first league goal with a brilliant header from a Mennillo corner for the Zebras to command a 4-2 lead.

The Wolves pressed for more goals not could not break through as Milan Ivanovic was back to his best after announcing his Socceroo retirement.

ADELAIDE: Petkovic, Yates, Ivanovic, Tobin, Mori, Hassell, Mennillo (Verschoor 90), Gibson, Trajanovski (Brazzale 75), Brooks (Pirone 85).

WOLVES: Brodbeck, Ceccoli, Stanton (Younis 77), Connolly, Horsley, Surjan, Chipperfield, Souris, Perinich (Dimoski 83), Huxley, Masi (Spencer 58).

SCORERS
Adelaide: Mori 3,33, Mennillo 23, Yates 49
Wolves: Chipperfield 22,27

CROWD: 2,232

POY
3 Gibson (AC)
2 Ivanovic (AC)
1 Ceccoli (WC)

MEREDITH DENIES BLUES

CARLTON .....1 BRISBANE STRIKERS 1

By John Rigas

Carlton have become the draw specialists with a 1-1 score against the Brisbane Strikers at Optus Oval on Saturday, their ninth draw of the season.

The result ended Brisbane's chance of making the play-offs in May — they sit in third last position.

It did not help Carlton either who in recent games have failed to secure a victory and their position in the top six now looks shaky.

Carlton coach Eddie Krncevic went for youth in this game, introducing three youth players: Alex Josifovski, Pece Siveski and Cameron Pino

Carlton created most of the scoring opportunities in the first-half with John Markovski involved in most of them.

In the seventh minute a left foot power blaster troubled goalkeeper Clint Bolton who couldn't hold onto the ball.

Markovski then played a through-ball to Josifovski who narrowly sprayed his shot wide after 28 minutes.

The Strikers then pressed forward in search of an opening goal, Troy Cranney weaved his way past the Carlton defence but was denied by brilliant goalkeeping from Dean Anastasiadis in the 34th minute.

A minute later Rod Brown put his glancing header slightly wide after a Nick Meredith pass.

Carlton struck first blood through Lubo Lapsansky in the 37th minute, after a curling free-kick from an acute angle.

Five minutes into the second-half a great move by Blues skipper Sean Douglas set up young Marco Bresciano, whose cross had too much spin on it which created a scoring opportunity as Bolton could not handle the ball.

The Strikers began the second-half brightly with a long-range effort from Chey Hews which dipped over the goal frame.

The strike of the game arrived in 53rd minute when Meredith produced a cannonball shot from 35 yards that left Anastasiadis grasping thin air to equalise for the visitors.

Brisbane were spurred on by Meredith's strike and from then on pressured the home team in every attacking raid.

Carlton had a penalty appeal turned down by referee Matthew Breeze, after what seemed a hand-ball by a Brisbane defender.

Krncevic mentioned after the game that the only positive thing to come out of the game was 18-year-old striker Alex Josifovski, and he thought the youngster was unlucky not to have scored in the first stanza.

"At the end of the day Brisbane came here for a draw, they had two shots at goal and one went in," Krncevic concluded.

Krncevic is hoping that Adrian Cervinski's transfer papers are finalised this week for him to play against his former club Melbourne Knights on the weekend, something the coach is praying for to solve Carlton's goal scoring problem.

Nick Meredith: Scored another of his trademark left-foot rockets.

BLUES: Anastasiadis, Douglas, Anthopoulos, Lapsansky (Trajkovski 79), Vlahos (Pino 71), Colosimo, Grella, Markovski, Atkinson, Josifovski (Siveski 88), Bresciano.

STRIKERS: Bolton, Gwynne, Zoricich, Meredith, S.Cranney, Brown (Brayshaw 65), T.Cranney, Hews, Harris (Invincible 74), Laybutt, Harper.

SCORERS
Blues: Lapsansky 37
Strikers: Meredith 53

CROWD: 1,500 (Approx.)

POY
3 Grella (C)
2 Atkinson (C)
1 Gwynne (BS)

Craig Johnston —

By Stuar

If you ask non-soccer people who Craig Johnston is, most will answer, "He is that Australian soccer player with the curly hair". Ask them about most of the current Socceroo squad and you will get blank looks.

There were Aussie footballers in England before Craig Johnston, yet he remains probably the most famous. Recently Craig returned home and ABSW caught up with him.

Craig overcame many hurdles to become a star in England, but what does he think of the mass exodus of players to Europe these days?

"I think that everybody should have a blast of intensity, they need to be transported into a professional, competitive, cut-throat environment that gives you an edge and a new perspective. The earlier you go the better because it wakes you up to how competitive football can be. You just do not have that hunger, desire, and emergency in this country yet."

When Craig dreamed of going to England to play there was no set path to follow, it was not the popular thing to do, and virtually unheard of.

"For me it was watching 'Match of the Day' every Tuesday night following 'Till Death do us Part' with Alf Garnett, and then going to school the following day and talking with my mates about how brilliant the teams were and how good the players and skill levels really were. The only way to touch it was to go over there. In my day there was not so much of the Serie A. or news from Spain. These days the Premier League is the sexiest in the world, of course players from over here still want to be a part of it, just like I did in the past. The TV captured my imagination and still captures the imagination of so many today."

If you think the Johnston story and his rise to fame with Liverpool was easy, think again. Consider the many hours he spent at Middlesbrough kicking a ball against a wall near Ayresome Park to overcome the deficiencies he saw in his own game. It was not easy.

"I wanted to quit and come home to Australia every day. The tears, the frustration, the doubts — they were all in my mind. It was hard to be different, apart from the physical difference of the game, it was hard if you did not fit into the team on a personal level. It is not pleasant and it was very, very lonely."

He overcame those trials and, following in the steps of Graeme Souness, moved from 'Boro to Liverpool.

(To learn more of his progress at that stage of his career try and get your hands on a copy of 'Walk Alone' by Craig Johnston and Neil Jameson, a must read for any Australian soccer lover).

Johnston's move to Liverpool is any player's dream come true. They were the greatest team of their era, and although he never played under Bill Shankly, he had three managers of the calibre of Bob Paisley, Joe Fagan, and Kenny Dalglish. With all the understandable hype surrounding Shankly, Paisley is less well known out here.

"Bob was a very likeable chap. He could not really express the way he felt in words though. However, you could tell when he was agitated because he would start mixing up his words. You knew when he was angry, or upset, or happy, he never used to say so but you could see the emotion in him and you knew what you should or should not be doing. His henchmen were quite articulate and they understood what he was saying. It was not just Bob that was so good, it was all the backroom boys. In fact, you did not see that much of Bob to be honest.

Typical Johnston
'Flying for the 'Pool'

"I liked him. I was lucky. I crossed both sides of Paisley, Fagan, and Dalglish — so many players are either on the good or bad side of the manager — but I learnt so much by being on both sides at differing times."

One of his team-mates, and in fact his room-mate for years, was keeper Bruce Grobbelaar. Recently he has been at the centre of allegations of illegal betting, match rigging etc., and that has certainly mystified his former room-mate.

"I watched it all closely, I rang him up and offered the sort of support mates should. I can put my hand on my heart and say Bruce is not a corrupt person. All the time I knew him I never suspected Bruce of doing the wrong thing by the team or by the game. I was shocked when he was implicated, the sorts of things he did for charities and for people that had nothing — this guy has a great soul and I was horrified by the whole scenario. At the time I kept my mouth shut on the whole issue as the media circus was large enough, but I know the man better than most, and I know talking to the other players they share the same disbelief that the saga went on for so long."

One of the moments that is etched in Craig Johnston's mind is the tragedy surrounding Heysel. Juventus versus Liverpool: a day that should have been triumphant, turned to tragedy. A day that would scar English football for years to come, leaving a bloody stain on its history forever.

For most there was the disaster only to think about, however Craig, and his team-mates, had to actually play the game that night.

"It was such a mind-numbing experience, you were playing in a dream-world. Playing was such a mechanical thing, you just played but you were not concentrating on the game. My body was just doing the things on the pitch but I was not thinking about it, we were playing the game without expression."

These days football violence is still a big issue, in both England and Europe (especially in Italy at present). If you read any of the books by the Brimson brothers you will realise that whilst violence seems to be at a low ebb, it has not gone away completely.

"The Police and anti-hooligan forces have done a stunning job because it was unsafe to go to football a few years ago. Certainly if the improvements had not been done we would have a different game today, it would have got worse, the violence, and we would have ended up with war each weekend. Now the game appeals to a wider fan and corporate sponsorship base, and this has opened up a lot more monetary opportunities for the game. However there is still a tension underneath which you can feel, it can erupt in isolated places, away from the likes of the CCTV system."

One solution was seen to be fences around the parameters of the field. This solution was not successful and led to tragedy (Hillsborough for instance), and although Craig had finished playing at that stage, it still impacted upon his life in a big way. In fact, he flew straight back to England upon hearing the news and was very involved in aiding the recovery process of those injured and Liverpool as a whole. In his book he describes it this way ...

'We had hard-man Steve McMahon barking in his strong Scouse accent "C'mon ya great lump; ya cant stay in bed all day. Get off ya back and come out with us for a pint!" Or John Aldridge saying "Cmon lad, out of bed. Put your boots on and 'ave a game with the lads!". In contrast there was Jocky Hansen pleading in his soft Scots accent. "Cmon son. For God's sake, give us a sign. Try and open your eyes or move your fingers for us. We're all with you." Knowing how much the team meant to the injured fans, our theory was that the sound of the players' voices just might help break the spell of the coma." (Walk Alone 1989, p. 252)

"It still goes through my mind all the time. There has been a lot said, and TV programs go back over it, this all still numbs me today. It starts you thinking about tragedy. It shows the real meaning of the game to Liverpool people, to English people. When tragedy happens to football then football people do not turn against the game, instead they move even closer to it. It shows the power of the game, but the memory of Hillsborough is as shocking as ever."

One question, above all others, remains on the lips of many Johnston fans. Why retire? Perhaps the question is better put looking back now. Did you retire to early?

"From a footballing perspective the answer would have to be yes. I do not think I reached my peak, which is a real shame. When I was 30 I would have been where I wanted to be, I would have learnt more, and my skill acquisition would have been even greater. So the tragedy is I could have been better and that is sad.

"On the other side there were family reasons for finishing, especially with my sister in such a bad way. I thought at first I would take a year off and pick up my career after Faye got better, but she never recovered and that was the saddest part of all." (Faye has never fully recovered from the accident, her daughter starts college this year in Newcastle, and this is the main reason Craig is home to visit his family.)

"In the end there are no regrets, I have completed the things I set out to do as an angry young man in the football world. Where once I was fascinated by the ball and how to manipulate it as a player, now I have become intrigued by other people's fascination with the game. This game has so much depth, I

LI
(L-R) Back: Mark Lawrenson, Jan Molb
Middle row: Roy Evans (First Team Coach), Steve Nicol, Steve
Front row: Ronnie Whelan, John Wark, Bob Paisley (Assistant Ma

To Hell and Back

t Jones

mazed at the power it has, the r to create national identities, the r of life and death inside football, the power of the history and the tradition of the game. All the things that make football so wonderful, so all encompassing. People who lived through Hillsborough understand what Bill Shankly meant when he said football was more than life and death, they did not take it the wrong way as so many have. It never ceases to ze me what the game means to le and what it provides them. Now chance for me to look at football a bigger perspective. I can look at r areas like merchandising and TV. more I find out what football ns to people the closer I get to the e."

any players will mention a game or al when asked about a highlight their career, but for Craig the onse is very different, and one that ost humble.

t was actually to lace your boots up sitting between Dalglish and Souness in the dressing room. Having those butterflies in your stomach and being nervous about going out to face the likes of Everton in a derby match and then realising you have Dalglish and Rush in front of you, Souness on one side of you, and Hansen and Lawrenson behind you, and then thinking to yourself 'And I'm nervous!'. Just sitting in the dressing room, looking at yourself in the mirror saying I am wearing the same shirt as Kenny Dalglish, that is the highlight."

Perhaps others would say an FA Cup goal was a highlight, but did he touch that first goal as he dived for the ball as it crossed the line?

"I did not get a touch on the ball until well after it was over the line. I just wanted to make sure the ball went into the back of the net. I had just made a thirty yard run to get there and 'Rushy' had beaten the keeper, I was screaming for it but he did the right thing by putting it away. I was just so carried away with the whole spectacle of the FA Cup Final against Everton."

Of course, later on he got a goal of his own and Rush got a second, Johnston picking up an FA Cup winner's medal, and beating rivals Everton as well!

The name Craig Johnston is instantly recognised in the community even today. Many know he was a great player and have a lot of respect for him, even if they know little about soccer. Craig sees things slightly differently however.

World Club Cup

Liverpool lost to Independiente in 1984.

"I think people are upset with Craig Johnston because he never played for Australia. There is a quote that I have spent 23 years apologising for saying: "Playing soccer for Australia is like surfing for England," but that was said directly to an administrator who ditched me when I was fifteen-years old or so — things have changed so much today. I would tell my own kids today to play for Australia but learn your craft abroad. In my day you did not have an administrator like David Hill or a coach like Terry Venables in charge. If that had happened back then, I would have played for Australia immediately. I really do not know why people recognise me still today."

This man has certainly been very innovative in terms of soccer and television products since retiring from the game, and today it continues, in fact he says his latest project was the one thing he was made for.

"I am living between Europe and the USA working on a project with Johan Cruyff, who is the president of the company I formed called 'World Soccer 6ixes'. What we are doing is basically what Kerry Packer did with cricket in the late 1970s. We are looking at professional six-a-side soccer with the big clubs like Barcelona, AC Milan, Liverpool, and Bayern Munich. These clubs come and play each other on real grass, four fifteen minute quarters, sin bins, and all sorts of other improvements. It has been fantastically well received by TV and the soccer community in general. I am really excited by it, this is the biggest project I have been ever involved in and that is a real buzz.

"Basically it is looking at all the training that the likes of Liverpool do and bringing it to the public."

When it comes down to it, Craig Johnston has faced many tragedies, whether it be personal, like his own health problems or his sister's dreadful accident, or in football — Heysel and Hillsborough to name two, yet he has overcome them all, leaving a man full of inspiration for others.

"Tragedy is about something shocking happening and when it does happen, sitting down and grieving and crying about it and talking with others to get through it. What it does is it brings you closer to people and gives someone a better understanding of the problems, and of issues like life and death. It shows you all the elements of the human soul, yours and others. You discover more about who you are and what you are meant to do, it can even show football as a mirror of society, and a mirror of your own self. When you come through tragedy you come through it a richer and stronger person, with those around you who have suffered through it too. You appreciate the good things in life and the good parts of sport. I have had a lot of ups-and-downs but it has made me a more balanced, more rational, and more reasonable person. I can really see how I can use a lot of my experience in projects like 'Grass roots to Glory', which is basically the Craig Johnston story, going to Middlesbrough and doing it tough, to show that at the end of the day, the harder you try, the more you put in, the more you will get out of it.

"You do not have to play for Liverpool, all you have to be is happy with yourself and your own performance by trying your best. I am sure there is a moral in there somewhere."

Indeed, if we can learn one thing from this most famous of players it is to overcome hard times to triumph. To do the very best you can is to gain the greatest rewards of all: personal satisfaction. We can take that from the football field and apply it to life.

Craig Johnston was a great player (my own grandfather's favourite player in his last years), and is a great man.

ABSW sends its best wishes to him and his family in their future endeavours. He may not realise it, but he is one of Australia's great ambassadors in whatever he does.

ERPOOL 1986/87

Mike Hooper, Gary Gillespie, Bruce Grobbelaar, Kevin MacDonald.
McMahon, Jim Beglin, Ian Rush, Barry Venison, Paul Walsh, Ronnie Moran (Chief Coach).
ager), Kenny Dalglish (Player/Manager), Alan Hansen (Captain), Craig Johnston, Sammy Lee.

Craig Johnston Fact File:

Born: 8-12-60, South Africa
Clubs: Middlesbrough, Liverpool
Position: Forward

League Career:

Middlesbrough	Aps	Sub	Gls
1977 - 1980:	61	3	16
Liverpool	**Aps**	**Sub**	**Gls**
1981 - 1988:	165	14	30

Liverpool Honours (During his time at Anfield)

1981/82	Lge Champions, LC Winners
1982/83	Lge Champions, LC Winners
1983/84	Lge Champions, LC Winners, Euro Cup Winners
1984/85	Lge Runners-up, Euro Cup Runners-up
1985/86	Lge Champions, FA Cup Winners
1986/87	Lge Runners-up, LC Runners-up
1987/88	Lge Champions, FA Cup Runners-up

(Legend: Aps, Sub, Gls, Lge = League, LC = League Cup)

Victorian Soccer Federation

PORT MELB 3 MOORABBIN C 0

By Dwyght Tuffnell

Highly fancied Port Melbourne Sharks secured their first win of the season, 3-0 over struggling Moorabbin City.

The defeat leaves Moorabbin at the bottom of the table, still winless and with just one point from five games.

The Sharks included two new signings in their side, Andy Vargas on loan from Carlton and former South Melbourne defender, John-Paul Knezevic.

Port were in front after 24 minutes with a goal from defender Bill Tsiakos.

He got an initial header on goal from a corner and soon found the ball back at his feet from a Knezevic touch and slammed it home.

Five minutes later the Sharks were 2-0 ahead.

A long ball from Tsiakos caught out Moorabbin defender William Armour and Alex Efstathiou stole in and lobbed Bruce McLaren.

Both Tsiakos and Efstathiou nearly added another goal each in the second-half, but were denied by the woodwork.

Tsiakos had his volley tipped onto the crossbar by McLaren whilst Efstathiou rolled a shot against the post.

Seven minutes from time Andy Vargas wrapped up the points for the Sharks, collecting a cross from Jim Latinopoulos before beating McLaren with a low shot.

Sharks: Frangos, Knezevic (Giaccherini), A.Vargas, Tsirtsakis, Sonsini, Tsiakos, Caimakamis, R.Vargas, Latinopoulos, Efstathiou (Palatsides), Heath.

City: McLaren, Costa, Leopold, Scrobogna (B.Caffrey), Colosimo, Davie, Marley, Armour, Graham, Caniglia (L.Caffrey), Hanna (Naughtin).

Votes: 3- Latinopoulos (PM), 2- Tsiakos (PM), 1- A.Vargas (PM)

BENTLEIGH 1 SPRINGVALE WE 0

By Milan Ninovic

Bentleigh Greens beat Springvale White Eagles 1-0 in a tight contest at Kingston Heath Soccer Complex on Saturday.

The only goal of the game came after 14 minutes, scored by John Papettas.

He took advantage of a couple of rebounds after White Eagles defender Mariano Calomino appeared to be fouled.

It was Papettas', and the Greens', third goal of the season.

The White Eagles were caught offside far too often when in good position and having the numerical advantage over the Greens defence.

Springvale goalkeeper Robert Brian kept the scoreline to just one goal with two crucial saves in a matter of minutes.

On the hour mark he denied Nick Van Egmond, who had just the White Eagles keeper to beat.

A minute later Brian was at it again, stopping the effort of Ciaran Feehan in a one-on-one situation.

Bentleigh gave a debut to their new signing from Heidelberg United, Tom Karapatsos.

Greens: Clarke, Karapatsos, Micheil (Crivari), McDonagh (Spence), Constantinou, Drakos, Kourkoutzelos, Van Egmond, Papettas, Feehan, Rossios (Charalambous).

White Eagles: Brian, Kitanovski, M.Marinkovic, R.Marinkovic, Calomino (Vodilovski), Mladenovic, Nikolic, Retre (V.De La Plaza), Cvetkovski, Craciun (Styczen), Gacovski.

Votes: 3- Papettas (BG), 2- Constantinou (BG), 1- M.Marinkovic (SWE).

THOMASTOWN 0 ALTONA MAGIC 1

By John De Felice

A minute before full-time substitute Vasco Trpcevski scored to give three vital points for Altona Magic over luckless Thomastown at Partridge Reserve.

Through out the first-half both sides played a cautious defensive game. Neither side did not want to make the first mistake that could have cost them the match.

In the 25th minute George Slifkas struck a shot from 25 yards which was the only meaningful shot for Thomastown, but his attempt was easily saved by Magic keeper Darren McGrath.

The best moment for the Zebras fell to Tony Lingurovski who in the 39th minute headed the ball at point blank range at the keeper but McGrath pulled off a reflex save to deny Zebras the opening goal.

The second-half was a repeat of the first with both sides opting for the long-range ball to break through the defensive walls.

In the 69th minute Altona nearly snatched the lead when Sash Becvinovski's shot deflected off Thomastown defender Steven Nedanovski and it hit the crossbar.

When the match was heading for a boring scoreless draw substitute wonder Trpcevski headed the ball in the 89th minute into the goal after it deflected off the goal frame from a corner.

Zebras: Trenkovski, D. De Propetis, Boschini, Jolevski (Grganovic), Nedanovski (Lakovski), Slifkas, Ardis, Lazarevski, Iacovitti, Lingurovski, Cuculevski.

Magic: McGrath, Vasilevski, Tasevski, Runje (Velkovski), Micevski, Markovski, Rusmir, Fak, Becvinovski (Sapazovski) Petrevski, Madarovski (Trpcevski).

Votes: 3- Trpcevski (AM) 2- Jolevski (TZ), 1- Ardis (TZ)

PRESTON 1 FAWKNER 3

By George Koukeris

While the game between Preston and Fawkner represented a classic showdown, the Lions were preparing to show the Blues why it's so difficult to win at Goodyear Stadium.

Preston began its business early on with some threatening attempts, but did not take long for the Lions to crack the Fawkner defence.

In the sixth minute, Anthony ripped a cracking shot into the top corner.

With the action starting to hot-up, Fawkner replied back with equal aggression. A solo run down the centre gave Santo Emmanuele the perfect opportunity to equalise, which he executed perfectly in the ninth minute.

In the 53rd minute defender Vitale Ferrante put the Blues in front with a sneaky interception.

Emmanuele, buried any hope for a Preston revival when he clinched the game for Fawkner. The winner came about in the 85th minute, with another brilliant solo run down the centre to beat two defenders and goalkeeper Lupce Acveski.

Lions: Acevski, Drogriski, Lisolaski, Stavrevski, Bizimovski, Kuzmanovski (Dimovski), M.Burlak (Ognenovski), Emsovski (Slavevski), A.Burlak, Markovski, Ujgonovski.

Blues: Gonzalez, Tramontana, Grimuad, Ferrante, Schipano, Ferrante, Bordignon, Vassiliadis (T.Simsek), Emmanuele, Duzel, Di Sauro (K. Simsek).

Votes: 3- Emmanuele (FB), 2- Di Sauro (FB), 1- Vassiliadis (FB)

In the other game of the weekend, **St Albans Saints** defeated **Sunshine Georgies** 3-0 to move to second on the ladder.

The in form Saints welcomed back Slavko Rados from a short spell at Melbourne Knights.

The Saints were all over Sunshine and Rados scored two goals. Hrvoje Karl netted the other goal for St Albans.

Sunshine's side was weakened with the absence of Brandan Vassallo and leading scorer Anthony Magnacca while Michael Branov was not fully fit.

Votes: 3- Rados (StA), 2- J.Kozic (StA), 1- Cuze (StA)

LEADING SCORERS

6	**Emmanuele (Fawkner Blues)**
5	**Lazarevski (Thomastown Zebras)**
	Gnjidic (Bulleen Inter Kings)
4	**Mezensof (South Dandenong)**
	Becvinovski (Altona Magic)
3	**Markovski (Preston Lions)**
	Papadopoulos (Green Gully Cavaliers)
	Duzel (Fawkner Blues)
	Papettas (Bentleigh Greens)
	Karl (St Albans Saints)
	Rados (St Albans Saints)

LEADING VOTES

9	**Gnjidic (Bulleen Inter Kings)**
8	**Mladenovic (Springvale White Eagles)**
7	**Biskic (Fawkner Blues)**
6	**Magnacca (Sunshine Georgies)**
5	**Becvinovski (Altona Magic)**
	Waddell (Green Gully Cavaliers)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fawkner Blues	5	4	1	0	13	5	13
St Albans Saints	5	3	1	1	9	4	10
Bulleen Inter kings	4	3	1	0	8	3	10
Altona Magic	5	3	1	1	8	4	10
Springvale White Eagles	5	3	0	2	5	6	9
Sunshine Georgies	5	3	0	2	5	9	9
Bentleigh Greens	5	2	1	2	3	5	7
Thomastown Zebras	5	2	0	3	8	8	6
Preston Lions	5	2	0	3	6	6	6
Green Gully Cavaliers	4	1	1	2	6	6	4
South Dandenong	4	1	1	2	7	9	4
Port Melbourne Sharks	5	1	0	4	7	8	3
Heidelberg United	4	1	0	3	3	6	3
Moorabbin City	5	0	1	4	2	11	1

"Healthy Diet — Try It"

PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS

Round 4:

Bulleen Inter Kings 3 (Gnjidic, Hollingsworth, Iebbiano) - Thomastown Zebras 1 (Lingurovski)

Round 5:

Port Melbourne Sharks 3 (Tsiakos, Efstathiou, A.Vargas) - Moorabbin City 0
Bentleigh Greens 1 (Papettas) - Springvale White Eagles 0
Thomastown Zebras 0 - Altona Magic 1 (Trpcevski)
St Albans Saints 3 (Rados 2, Karl) - Sunshine Georgies 0
Preston Lions 1 (A.Burlak) - Fawkner Blues 3 (Emmanuele 2, Schipano)

PREMIER LEAGUE FIXTURES

Round 6

Friday February 27

Fawkner Blues v Bentleigh Greens - Smith Reserve - kick off 8.30pm

Saturday February 28

South Dandenong v St Albans Saints - Ross Reserve - kick off 6.00pm
Moorabbin City v Thomastown Zebras - Kingston Heath Soccer Complex - kick off 6.00pm
Altona Magic v Heidelberg United - Paisley Park - kick off 8.00pm
Springvale White Eagles v Port Melbourne Sharks - Serbian Sports Centre - kick off 6.00pm

Sunday March 1

Sunshine Georgies v Preston Lions - Chaplin Reserve - kick off 6.00pm

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WOMEN'S WRITES

BY JANENE MAR

ANSETT AUSTRALIA SUMMER SERIES
TOP FOUR FINALS SERIES - SYDNEY

THIS IS IT: THE FINALS

The 1997/98 Ansett Australia Summer Series national league comes to a thrilling conclusion this weekend with the battle that is the TOP FOUR FINALS SERIES.

NSW won the right to host the finals in stiching up the most points of all six teams. SA were also firmly in the race until the last round but they stumbled at the final hurdle. Sydney's St George Stadium in Rockdale is the chosen venue.

The teams to have emerged as the best four are NSW Institute of Sport, ACT Academy of Sport, SA Sports Institute, and surprise packet ITC Victoria. NSW would have to be considered favourites, a slick outfit with the results on the board and a pleasure to watch.

But Victoria has proved that anything can happen, and in finals football, it is form on the day that counts, not reputation or past achievements.

Friday's major semi-final between pacesetters NSW and SA promises to be a cracker, and on the single time they have met this season in the Canberra crossover round, the two traded goals before NSW posted a late winner for a scoreline of 4-3. But tensions will be much greater on this occasion, the victor advancing directly to the Grand Final with the advantage of a day's recovery as well. The loser will tough it out on Saturday in the preliminary final against the winner of the winner of the elimination semi. Whichever team wins here will be battling fatigue with three hard matches in as many days.

NSW INSTITUTE OF SPORT

After a sluggish start where they recorded just one point from round one at home, NSWIS soon found their feet and are consistently producing a classy and entertaining brand of football. Way ahead in the goalscoring stakes, NSW also hold a narrow edge in the defensive stakes, and a far superior goal-difference to any other team.

A team of great pedigree and experience, NSW are a dynamic and dominating force in possession of the ball, and combine quality skills and footballing knowledge to construct flowing passing combinations and effectvie supporting runs.

With the added bonus of home advantage, NSW are clear favourites to take their first national league title, following the disappointment of losing in a shootout against Queensland in last season's tiebreaker match to miss out on a place in the Grand Final.

Stars to watch:

KATRINA BOYD and JULIE MURRAY – a lethal attacking combination who have forged an exciting partnership up front. Both possessing magic close skills and sharp brains, the two are equally at home creating or scoring goals. Their work off the ball proves just as vital to their success, with incisive runs and perfect positioning.

The deadly Katrina Boyd

JOANNE PETERS – on the comeback trail after a year's layoff from knee reconstruction surgery, and slowly but surely returning to her renowned form. The central midfielder has the ability to control proceedings, with fantastic vision and ball skill, aerial power and a real understanding of the game.

Coach Selby says –

"It's going to be hard to win, there are no easy games. Our game against SA will be hard, and we'll be looking at working on their stronger players."

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SOCCER ASSOCIATION

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SPORTS INSTITUTE

Last season's runners-up started the season with a 'bang', emphatically defeating Queensland in what was a replay of the Grand Final and making it clear they want to win this year. Their strong start has been marred by a replay of the grandfinal and making it clear they want to win this year. Their strong start has been marred by slump in form during the last two rounds, during which they had uncharacteristic difficulty scoring goals, and acopped two losses at the hands of Victoria. They will however take some encouragement from their last match against Queensland, where they managed to regain some form.

A very young team who work very effective as a unit, SA have an uncanny ability to produce goals from nothing and are extremely dangerous on the break. They can suddenly move up a few gears with no warning, and score a goal or two to turn the game around. The strike players aare very ably supported by a quality midfield and an organised defence.

Stars to Watch

NATALIE THOMAS – This 19-year-old stiker has stood up and made on outstanding impression on this year's league. Fast and with skills to match, Thomas has caused plenty of headaches for opposition defences with intelligent running and a cracking shot.

SHARON BLACK – On her day, can turn on the power and score spectacular match-winning goals. Has a sweet scoring boot and is most famous for her long-range strikes.

Coach McComack says –

"Although underdogs (to NSW), we've got a good chance. If we're playing to our best, and they're not at their best, we'll do it."

ACT ACADEMY OF SPORT

Kicked off their campaign with a good win over NSW, and overall have produced a solid effort throughout the season. Having played together as a unit for some time, display a good discipline in working to close down their opponent, shutting down their passing options all over the park.

On their day, ACT have proved they can beat anyone, and with numerous internationals in their ranks, have the players to take control, with good support from the team's younger brigade.

Are creating the opportunities in front of goal but need to finish off their chances with greater regularity if they are to make their presence felt in these playoffs. Have the attitude and work-rate to do the job if everyone is performing as a team.

Stars to Watch

LISA CASAGRANDE – Unrelenting worker up front, either creating goalscoring opportunities or trying to win the ball off the opposition. Quick and not afraid to take on defenders with weaving runs, Casagrande will lead the ACT attack.

TRACI BARTLETT – Solid as a rock in the sweeping position and a valuable leader at the back. Traci is composed and timely in the tackle and a thinking defender. who can also launch attacking plays from the back-line.

Julie Murray: forms one part of the deadly duo of 'Murray and Boyd'. See them this weekend.

ITC VICTORIA

Last season's wooden-spooners have surprised everyone with their late surge and upset victories to force their way into the Finals at the expense of reigning champions Queensland. Three sensational wins over SA and Qld in the final two rounds silenced all the critics, after they had gone without a win the season previous to that.

The Vics are the only team without a single international, but make up for it with gutsy determination.

It could be said that Victoria take on the play-offs as the form team, and with confidence at an all-time high, they are well-placed to cause more upsets.

Stars to Watch

LOUIS BISBY – On her day has the ability to control the game not only from midfield, with her distribution and ball winning skills, but is also lethal from corners and long-range free-kicks.

EMMA BRACKEN – Has consistently pulled off spectacular save and makes few mistakes. Has great reflexes and is not afraid to come off her line to clear up dangerous balls.

Coach Olver says –

"You've got to be in it to win it. We're there and anything can happen. It's a difficult assignment, but we're looking forward to the challenge."

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SOCCER ASSOCIATION

FINAL POINTS

NSW:	20
SA:	18
ACT:	14
VIC:	10
QLD:	9
NNSW:	7

TOP FOUR FINALS SERIES:
ST GEORGE STADIUM ROCKDALE

Fri 27 Feb
5pm ELIMINATION SEMI-FINAL: ACT v VIC
7pm MAJOR SEMI-FINAL: NSW v SA
Sat 28 Feb
7pm PRELIMINARY FINAL: WINNER ELIMINATION SEMI v LOSER MAJOR SEMI

Sun 1 Mar
6pm GRAND FINAL: WINNER MAJOR SEMI v WINNER PRELIM FINAL

PLAYER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Ansett Australia Summer Series Player of the Year function.

Saturday Feb 28 (1pm to 3pm) at the Ballroom, Sydney Airport Hilton, Arncliffe.

Tickets are limited ($45). Interested? Phone AWSA on(02) 6281 7999

SBS's Liz Deep-Jones will be the host of the awards, which will feature soccer and sports dignitaries.

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SOCCER ASSOCIATION

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SOCCER ASSOCIATION

ASSISTANT NATIONAL COACH

The Australian Women's Soccer Association is seeking applications from suitably qualified persons to the position of Assistant National Coach.

The successful candidate will have experience and proven success at the elite level.

A contract up to the 2000 Olympic Games and an attractive salary package and conditions will be negotiated. The position is full-time, based in Canberra, as part of the AIS Women's Soccer Scholarship Program and will commence in early June.

Further information including the selection criterion may be obtained on 02 6281 7999. Applications addressing the selection criterion must be forwarded to

Chief Exective
AWSA
Football House
Unit 2/3 Phipps Close
DEAKIN ACT 2600

Applications close on Monday 16 March 1998.

This position is supported by the

Australian Sports Commission

Around the Globe

ENGLAND

Ryan Giggs has been ruled out of Man United's European Cup clash with Monaco. Giggs limped off 13 minutes from time during United's 2-0 victory over Derby County at Old Trafford with a hamstring complaint which will sideline him for a couple of weeks. The Red Devils' first Premiership victory over Derby extended their lead at the top of the table to nine points, but Ferguson was more concerned about his mounting injury list. Ronny Johnsen (calf), Ole Gunner Solskjaer (virus) and Henning Berg, who is on international duty, have also been ruled out of the FA Cup replay against Barnsley tommorow. "Ryan has a hamstring injury and that's bad news for us," Ferguson said. "It means that he misses the Monaco game which is a blow to us. But we will just have to get on with it and find another way of playing." Giggs scored United's first after 18 minutes before he won a penalty for their second, which was converted by Denis Irwin in the 71st minute.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal	1	**C Palace**	0
Grimandi 49			
Bolton	1	**West Ham**	1
Blake 86		Sinclair 65	
Coventry	1	**Barnsley**	0
Dublin 89p			
Leicester	2	**Chelsea**	0
Heskey 3,89			
Liverpool	P	**Everton**	P
Man Utd	2	**Derby**	0
Giggs 18			
Irwin 71p			
Sheff Wed	1	**Tottenham**	0
Di Canio 33			
Southampton	3	**Blackburn**	0
Ostenstad 19,88			
Hirst 78			
Wimbledon	2	**A Villa**	2
Euell 10		Milosevic 41	
Leaburn 39			

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	27	11	2	1	35	6	6	3	4	21	13	56
Arsenal	25	10	2	2	29	9	3	6	2	16	17	47
L'pool	26	9	1	4	28	13	4	6	2	16	12	46
Chelsea	26	8	2	1	22	8	6	1	8	30	21	45
B'burn	26	8	3	2	30	15	4	6	3	14	15	45
Derby	27	9	3	1	25	8	3	3	8	16	26	42
Leicester	27	5	7	3	16	11	5	3	4	15	12	40
West Ham	26	9	1	1	26	8	3	2	10	12	28	39
Leeds	25	5	3	4	17	14	6	2	5	17	14	38
Coventry	27	6	7	1	21	14	3	2	8	11	21	36
Soton	27	8	1	5	23	16	2	3	8	10	21	34
Sheff Wed	27	7	4	4	25	22	2	3	7	16	29	34
Wim'don	25	4	3	6	14	17	4	5	3	13	11	32
Newcastle	25	6	3	5	15	15	3	2	6	10	15	32
A Villa	27	5	3	5	17	18	3	3	8	11	20	30
Everton	26	5	2	5	18	18	2	5	7	13	21	28
Tot'ham	27	5	4	4	14	16	2	2	10	11	27	27
Bolton	26	3	8	2	11	13	1	4	8	12	29	24
C Palace	26	0	4	8	7	23	5	4	5	14	15	23
Barnsley	26	4	3	5	14	22	2	1	11	8	40	22

DIVISION ONE

Bradford City	0	Oxford Utd	0
Huddersfield	1	Wolvers	0
Ipswich	5	Norwich	0
Middlesbrough	3	Sunderland	1
QPR	0	Port Vale	1
Reading	0	Portsmouth	1
Stockport	3	Charlton	0
Stoke City	1	N Forest	1
Swindon	1	Man City	3
Tranmere	0	Crewe	3
WBA	1	Bury	1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Midboro	32	11	3	2	31	10	8	5	3	23	17	65
N Forest	32	12	2	2	36	16	7	5	4	16	13	64
Sun'land	31	9	4	2	31	13	8	3	5	23	19	58
Sheff Utd	30	11	4	0	28	11	3	8	4	18	20	54
Charlton	32	10	4	1	30	14	5	4	8	24	28	53
Wolves	32	10	4	2	29	14	5	2	9	13	18	51
Stockport	33	11	4	1	34	13	4	1	12	18	30	50
WBA	33	8	4	5	18	15	6	4	6	17	17	50
Ipswich	32	7	4	4	25	14	5	8	4	23	19	48
Birm'ham	31	6	6	3	17	9	6	5	5	22	14	47
Swindon	34	9	3	5	25	19	4	4	9	11	30	46
Bradford	34	8	7	2	20	14	3	5	9	14	21	45
Crewe	33	6	2	9	19	26	7	2	7	24	22	43
Norwich	33	7	5	5	16	20	4	3	9	15	30	41
QPR	33	7	6	4	19	15	2	5	9	16	33	38
Oxford U	32	7	4	4	20	15	3	3	11	18	30	37
Tranmere	32	6	5	5	21	17	3	4	9	15	24	36
Hud'sfield	33	6	4	6	18	17	3	5	9	16	32	36
Reading	32	6	4	7	22	24	3	5	7	10	26	36
Port Vale	33	5	5	7	20	20	4	2	10	18	30	34
Man City	33	4	4	9	21	20	4	5	7	16	18	33
Bury	33	3	9	5	15	19	2	8	6	14	22	32
P'mouth	32	6	3	8	22	27	2	3	10	12	23	30

DIVISION TWO

Bristol R	3	Oldham	1
Burnley	1	Brentford	1
Chesterfield	3	Wrexham	1
Fulham	2	Wigan	0
Gillingham	1	Carlisle U	0
Grimsby	2	Bournemouth	1
Luton	0	Bristol C	0
Millwall	0	Northampton	0
Preston	1	Wycombe	1
Southend	2	Blackpool	1
Walsall	0	Plymouth	1
York	1	Watford	1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Watford	32	9	4	2	25	14	10	5	2	22	10	66
Bristol C	33	12	3	2	32	13	6	5	5	22	14	62
North'ton	33	11	4	2	26	12	2	9	5	12	15	52
Grimsby	30	8	5	2	24	9	6	4	5	18	16	51
Fulham	32	9	6	1	20	7	5	3	8	22	22	51
Bristol R	32	8	1	6	26	24	6	7	4	22	22	50
Oldham	32	11	4	1	32	14	1	8	7	13	21	48
Gill'ham	32	8	5	3	21	15	5	4	7	20	24	48
B'mouth	32	9	6	2	22	8	3	4	8	18	25	46
Wrexham	31	7	6	2	21	16	4	5	7	16	22	44
Chesterfld	33	8	6	2	20	12	2	8	7	11	18	44
Blackpool	33	9	5	3	27	19	3	2	11	16	31	43
York	32	9	3	4	22	14	1	10	5	16	26	43
Wycombe	33	7	7	2	22	15	2	6	9	16	28	40
Millwall	31	5	5	6	17	17	6	2	7	16	22	40
Walsall	30	7	5	3	20	12	3	3	9	12	23	38
Wigan	31	6	4	5	26	24	4	2	10	17	25	36
Preston	32	6	4	6	18	16	3	5	8	19	22	36
Plymouth	32	6	5	5	26	23	2	6	8	13	23	35
Burnley	32	6	8	2	24	15	2	2	12	14	29	34
Luton	32	4	4	9	23	33	4	6	5	14	16	34
Brentford	33	7	5	4	25	18	0	7	10	8	34	34
Carlisle	32	5	5	6	19	20	3	2	11	21	30	31
Southend	33	6	6	5	20	21	2	1	13	13	40	31

DIVISION THREE

Cardiff	0	Cambridge	0
Chester	4	Rotherham	0
Doncaster	0	Torquay	1
Exeter	0	Colchester	1
Hull City	2	Scunthorpe	1
Leyton O	2	Swansea	2
Lincoln	2	Barnet	0
Man	4	Darlington	0
Notts Cty	1	Scarborough	0
Peterboro	0	Macclesfield	1
Rochdale	2	Brighton	0
Shrewsbury	1	Hartlepool	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Notts Cty	33	9	5	2	26	15	12	4	1	31	15	72
Mac'field	33	14	3	0	30	8	2	7	7	17	24	58
Torquay	33	11	2	3	31	14	5	6	6	21	26	56
Peterboro	33	10	3	4	31	14	5	7	4	23	18	55
Barnet	33	9	5	3	29	16	6	4	6	18	21	54
Lincoln	32	7	5	4	21	19	7	6	3	17	17	53
Scarboro	33	11	3	3	35	19	4	4	8	19	28	52
Chester	33	10	5	2	26	7	5	2	9	20	29	52
Roth'ham	33	8	4	4	31	24	5	7	5	18	20	50
Leyton O	32	9	4	3	28	13	4	5	7	15	16	48
Colchester	33	10	3	4	28	18	3	5	8	24	32	47
Exeter	33	6	8	3	25	16	5	5	6	22	24	46
Hartlepool	33	7	10	0	27	14	2	7	7	15	22	44
Mansfield	33	7	6	3	30	19	4	4	9	14	20	43
Scu'thorpe	32	6	5	5	19	19	6	2	8	19	22	43
Shr'bury	31	8	2	5	23	19	2	7	7	18	25	39
Cardiff	33	4	10	3	17	15	3	8	5	15	18	39
C'bridge	33	7	5	4	27	22	1	9	7	16	23	38
Darlington	32	9	5	2	30	19	0	4	12	10	36	36
Rochdale	33	9	2	5	25	11	2	1	14	11	32	36
Swansea	33	5	5	6	16	13	5	1	11	19	33	36
Hull	33	7	4	5	29	25	1	1	15	14	37	29
Brighton	33	1	7	9	13	26	3	4	9	12	22	23
Doncaster	33	2	3	11	9	35	1	4	12	12	46	16

SCOTLAND

Fan mail from Celtic supporters helped Harald Brattbakk score four goals against Kilmarnock. The Norwegian striker revealed that letters from supporters had aided him in an attempt to end his goal drought. Brattbakk, signed from Rosenburg for $5 million earlier this season had not scored in his first six league games for his new club. But he broke that sequence with the four goals which helped Celtic to stay joint top of the Scottish Premier League. "A lot of people wrote to me saying that they believed in what I can do as a player. That helped me. Of course it is good to score but it is just as important to be part of the team. It will be important that we get a bit of luck and those ones go in as well in future matches," he said. Celtic are joined at the top by Rangers who, had to come from behind to beat bottom club Hibs with a late goal from German Jorg Alberts. Hearts, two adrift, scored four times to win at Motherwell.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Celtic	4	**Kilmarnock**	0
Brattbakk 11,36,70,87			
Dunfermline	2	**Dundee Utd**	2
Smith 52,90		McSwegan 40,80	
Hibernian	1	**Rangers**	2
Lavety 9		Negri 35	
		Albertz 88	
Motherwell	2	**Hearts**	4
Coyle 6		Hamilton 38,58	
Falconer 37		Fulton 64	
		Adam 87	
St Johnstone	0	**Aberdeen**	1
		Dodds 14	

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	25	10	3	0	37	12	5	4	3	20	15	52
Celtic	25	9	1	2	29	6	7	3	3	18	11	52
Hearts	25	8	2	2	28	17	8	2	3	28	16	52
K'nock	25	6	2	4	15	16	3	4	6	13	28	33
St J'stone	25	5	2	6	14	17	4	3	5	12	14	32
Dundee U	25	5	4	3	19	10	2	4	7	16	28	29
Aberdeen	25	5	4	4	17	14	2	3	7	11	25	28
Dunf'line	25	3	6	4	17	21	3	2	7	11	25	26
M'well	25	3	3	6	18	20	3	2	8	15	25	23
Hibernian	25	4	3	6	21	19	0	3	9	8	28	18

DIVISION ONE

Ayr United	1	Stirling	0
Dundee	1	Airdrie	0
Morton	3	Raith R	1
Hamilton	P	St Mirren	P
Partick	0	Falkirk	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dundee	25	5	5	3	14	8	9	3	0	25	6	50
Raith	25	8	2	2	20	6	4	4	5	17	18	42
Falkirk	25	6	3	3	19	16	6	3	4	21	18	42
Airdrie	25	7	5	1	20	13	3	5	4	11	15	40
Hamilton	24	4	4	3	11	12	4	3	6	21	22	31
St Mirren	24	6	2	4	18	15	2	3	7	13	22	29
Morton	26	4	3	6	16	20	3	4	6	18	20	28
Ayr	25	5	2	6	20	19	2	4	6	8	19	27
Partick	25	2	4	6	20	26	3	5	5	12	16	24
Stirling	24	2	6	5	16	26	3	2	6	15	18	23

DIVISION TWO

Clydebank	2	Brechin	1
Forfar	1	East Fife	0
IC Thistle	2	Livingston	2
Stenhousemuir	2	Q South	0
Stranraer	3	Clyde	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Clydebank	24	6	5	2	19	10	7	3	1	18	9	47
Livingston	23	7	1	2	20	12	4	6	3	18	15	40
Q South	24	6	3	2	14	10	4	2	7	23	25	35
Sten'muir	24	6	4	3	23	18	3	2	6	11	17	33
Stranraer	24	6	3	4	27	18	2	4	5	11	17	31
Forfar	23	5	3	4	23	21	3	4	4	17	20	31
East Fife	24	5	1	5	20	24	4	2	7	12	20	30
IC Thistle	22	5	6	2	26	15	1	2	6	16	18	26
Clyde	24	4	3	4	14	13	2	5	6	14	24	26
Brechin	24	3	5	3	12	14	1	4	8	15	33	21

DIVISION THREE

Berwick	1	Alloa	1
Cowdenbeath	2	Dumbarton	0
E Stirling	1	Ross County	0
Montrose	1	Albion Rovers	3
Queen's Pk	0	Arbroath	2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alloa	23	7	0	4	24	13	7	2	3	24	15	44
Arbroath	24	7	3	2	29	16	6	1	5	20	16	43
E Stirling	25	9	0	4	24	13	4	2	6	12	20	41
Ross Cty	23	5	3	3	26	13	6	3	3	18	12	39
Albion	23	7	2	1	22	12	4	2	7	20	30	37
Berwick	24	4	4	5	19	21	4	3	4	15	17	31
Q Park	25	4	2	7	17	23	3	5	4	12	13	28
Cow'beath	24	5	1	7	12	20	4	0	7	12	19	28
Montrose	23	2	3	7	15	24	4	2	5	17	29	23
Dumbarton	24	0	5	6	8	16	4	3	6	21	25	20

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Around the Globe

BELGIUM

Standard	3	Aalst	0
Molenbeek	0	Club Bruges	2
Antwerp	0	Westerlo	0
Beveren	1	Harelbeke	0
Ghent	1	Lokeren	1
Charleroi	3	Ekeren	2
Genk	3	Lommel	0
Lierse	1	Sint-Truiden	0
Mouscron	2	Anderlecht	2

FRANCE

Olympique Marseille became the latest team to throw away the chance of breaking clear in the French first division when they crashed to a humiliating 1-0 defeat at home to relegation-threatened Rennes on Saturday.

With Metz losing 2-1 at Le Havre, Marseille should have opened a three point lead against a side fighting to stay in the top flight.

Instead, Rolland Courbis' side lost at home for the second time in five days, having been beaten 3-2 by AJ Auxerre at the Velodrome in their League Cup quarter-final.

Marseille	0	Rennes	1
Le Havre	2	Metz	1
Lens	1	Bordeaux	0
Guingamp	0	PS Germain	0
Montpellier	1	Lyon	1
Auxerre	1	Cannes	1
Nantes	0	Toulouse	1
Strasbourg	2	Chateauroux	0
Bastia	1	Monaco	0

GREECE

Athinaikos	0	Panthinaikos	3
Ethnikos	1	Paniliakos	0
Kalamata	3	Proodeftiki	1
Panahaiki	1	Apollon	0
Veria	4	Panionios	0
Iraklis	3	OFI	1
Kavala	2	Xanthi	0
Olympiakos	2	Salonika	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	23	19	1	3	59	16	58
Panathinaikos	23	19	1	3	62	17	58
AEK	22	16	4	2	44	20	52
PAOK	23	13	6	4	40	25	45
Ionikos	22	13	5	4	34	19	44
Iraklis	23	13	5	5	36	24	44
OFI	23	10	3	10	32	36	33
Xanthi	23	9	4	10	39	42	31
Apollon	23	8	5	10	22	30	29
Paniliakos	23	7	7	9	32	32	28
Panionios	23	8	3	12	27	32	27
Panahaiki	23	7	1	15	20	44	22
Veria	23	6	4	13	26	37	22
Kalamata	23	5	5	13	17	31	20
Ethnikos	23	6	1	16	17	35	19
Proodeftiki	23	5	4	14	22	47	19
Kavala	23	4	5	14	25	43	17
Athinaikos	23	4	4	15	14	38	16

HOLLAND

Groningen	0	Graafschap	3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ajax	22	19	2	1	68	10	59
PSV	22	13	8	1	63	27	47
Heerenveen	21	12	5	4	37	25	41
Vitesse	22	11	6	5	52	37	39
Feyenoord	22	11	6	5	38	27	39
Willem II	22	10	3	9	37	33	33
Fortuna Sit	22	10	3	9	31	38	33
NAC Breda	22	8	4	10	26	27	28
Utrecht	21	8	3	10	41	47	27
Sparta Rot	22	7	6	9	40	41	27
Enschede	21	6	8	7	23	24	26
Roda JC	22	7	5	10	32	30	26
Nijmegen	22	8	1	13	24	43	25
Graafschap	23	6	7	10	31	27	25
Groningen	23	5	7	11	28	41	22
Maastricht	22	6	3	13	20	49	21
Waalwijk	21	4	6	11	26	46	18
Volendam	22	2	5	14	15	60	11

ITALY

Bari	2	Lecce	2
Bologna	3	Piacenza	0
Brescia	2	Atalanta	2
Fiorentina	3	Juventus	0
Lazio	3	Inter Milan	0
AC Milan	3	Empoli	1
Napoli	0	AS Roma	2
Sampdoria	0	Udinese	0

PORTUGAL

Benfica crushed old rivals Sporting Lisbon 4-1 away and kept their title hopes alive after championship leaders Porto drew against Campomaiorense 2-2 away.

Recently out of form Porto have a lead of eight points in the championship, but Benfica are still in range for the title after putting on an impressive display against longstanding rivals Sporting who have also struggled in recent matches.

Leca	0	Estrela	4
Academica	0	Maritimo	0
Chaves	1	Belenenses	0
Farense	2	V Guimaraes	0
V Setubal	1	Varzim	1
Rio Ave	1	Salgueiros	1
Camp'rense	2	Porto	2
Braga	1	Boavista	2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Porto	22	15	5	2	49	24	50
Benfica	21	11	6	4	32	19	39
Guimaraes	22	11	4	7	26	16	37
Estrela	22	9	7	6	30	25	34
Rio Ave	22	9	7	6	29	25	34
Boavista	22	8	9	5	28	20	33
Sporting Lisbon	21	8	8	5	24	17	32
Maritimo	22	9	5	8	24	22	32
Salgueiros	22	8	7	7	30	25	31
Farense	22	6	10	6	29	29	28
Leca	22	8	4	10	22	29	28
Braga	22	6	9	7	31	29	27
Camp'rense	22	7	6	9	31	37	27
Academica	22	5	8	9	17	27	23
Varzim	22	5	8	9	20	32	2
Setubal	22	5	7	10	22	27	22
Chaves	22	5	3	14	19	38	18
Belenenses	22	2	7	13	12	34	13

SPAIN

Barcelona	2	Compostela	0
Real Betis	1	Espanyol	3
Salamanca	3	Merida	1
Real Sociedad	2	Oviedo	2
Valencia	2	Celta Vigo	1
Deportivo	3	Athletic Bilbao	0
Mallorca	2	R Santander	1
Tenerife	4	Real Madrid	3
Sporting Gijon	1	Valladolid	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	25	15	4	6	52	35	49
R Madrid	26	13	8	5	47	30	47
R Sociedad	26	11	11	4	41	24	44
Mallorca	26	11	9	6	38	22	42
At Madrid	25	11	8	6	52	32	41
Celta Vigo	26	12	5	9	36	31	41
At Bilbao	26	10	10	6	32	31	40
Espanyol	26	9	11	6	32	19	38
Valencia	26	11	4	11	39	33	37
R Betis	24	10	7	7	32	32	37
Zaragoza	25	9	8	8	35	41	35
Deportivo	26	7	12	7	29	27	33
Oviedo	26	7	12	7	28	32	33
Valladolid	25	9	5	11	24	35	32
R Santander	26	8	6	12	29	37	30
Merida	26	7	7	12	25	39	28
Tenerife	26	7	7	12	30	44	28
Compostela	26	6	9	11	35	42	27
Salamanca	26	7	6	13	21	30	27
Gijon	26	1	3	22	22	59	6

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WORLD CUP FOOTBALL
FRANCE 1998

'FIRST ROUND' CHAMPIONSHIP – FOLLOWING ENGLAND & SCOTLAND

DEPART 9 JUNE
10 JUNE UNTIL 27 JUNE
16 NIGHTS

DATE	MATCHES		
12/6/98	PARAGUAY	vs	BULGARIA
15/6/98	ENGLAND	vs	TUNISIA
16/6/98	SCOTLAND	vs	NORWAY
19/6/98	SPAIN	vs	PARAGUAY
22/6/98	ENGLAND	vs	ROMANIA
23/6/98	SCOTLAND	vs	MOROCCO
25/6/98	HOLLAND	vs	MEXICO

PACKAGE PER PERSON INCLUDES:
- RETURN ECONOMY AIRFARES
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'FIRST & SECOND ROUND'

DEPART 9 JUNE
10 JUNE UNTIL 13 JULY
32 NIGHTS

AS PER FIRST ROUND MATCH ITINERARY FOLLOWED BY THE SECOND ROUND MATCH ITINERARY.

PACKAGE PER PERSON INCLUDES:
- RETURN ECONOMY AIRFARES
- 15 STADIUM TICKETS INCLUDING, 10 FIRST & SECOND ROUND, 2 QUARTER FINALS, 1 SEMI FINAL, 3RD & 4TH PLACE & FINAL
- 32 NIGHTS ACCOMMODATION
- TRANSFERS TO & FROM THE AIRPORTS, HOTELS & STADIUMS BY LUXURY COACH
- FULLY ESCORTED

PACKAGE PRICE PER PERSON (TWIN SHARE)	*** TOURIST	**** SUPERIOR TOURIST
CATEGORY 3	$14,123.00	$15,403.00
Single Supplement	$2,560.00	$3,840.00

'FINAL' CHAMPIONSHIP

DEPART 7 JULY
8 JULY UNTIL 15 JULY
7 NIGHTS

DATE	MATCHES	PLACE
8/7/98	SEMI FINAL	PARIS - S.D.
11/7/98	3 & 4 PLACE FINAL	PARIS - P.D.P.
12/7/98	FINAL	PARIS - S.D.

PACKAGE PER PERSON INCLUDES:
- RETURN ECONOMY AIRFARES
- 3 STADIUM TICKETS INCLUDING, 10 FIRST & SECOND ROUND, 2 QUARTER FINALS, 1 SEMI FINAL, 3RD & 4TH PLACE & FINAL
- 7 NIGHTS ACCOMMODATION
- TRANSFERS TO & FROM THE AIRPORTS, HOTELS & STADIUMS BY LUXURY COACH
- FULLY ESCORTED

PACKAGE PRICE PER PERSON (TWIN SHARE)	*** TOURIST	**** SUPERIOR TOURIST
CATEGORY 3	$6,499.00	$6,799.00
Single Supplement	ON REQUEST	ON REQUEST

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WORLD CUP FOOTBALL
FRANCE 1998

'FIRST ROUND' CHAMPIONSHIP – FOLLOWING ITALY

DEPART 9 JUNE
10 JUNE UNTIL 27 JUNE
16 NIGHTS

DATE	MATCHES		
11/6/98	ITALY	vs	CHILE
13/698	SOUTH KOREA	vs	MEXICO
14/6/98	YUGOSLAVIA	vs	IRAN
17/6/98	ITALY	vs	CAMEROON
21/6/98	USA	vs	IRAN
23/6/98	ITALY	vs	AUSTRIA
25/6/98	GERMANY	vs	IRAN

PACKAGE PER PERSON INCLUDES:
- RETURN ECONOMY AIRFARES
- 7 FIRST ROUND TICKETS
- 16 NIGHTS ACCOMMODATION
- TRANSFERS TO & FROM THE AIRPORTS, HOTELS & STADIUMS BY LUXURY COACH
- FULLY ESCORTED

PACKAGE PRICE PER PERSON (TWIN SHARE)	*** TOURIST	**** SUPERIOR TOURIST
CATEGORY 3	$6,947.00	$7,647.00
Single Supplement	$1,280.00	$1,920.00

'FIRST & SECOND ROUND'

DEPART 9 JUNE
10 JUNE UNTIL 13 JULY
32 NIGHTS

AS PER FIRST ROUND MATCH ITINERARY FOLLOWED BY THE SECOND ROUND MATCH ITINERARY.

PACKAGE PER PERSON INCLUDES:
- RETURN ECONOMY AIRFARES
- 15 STADIUM TICKETS INCLUDING, 10 FIRST & SECOND ROUND, 2 QUARTER FINALS, 1 SEMI FINAL, 3RD & 4TH PLACE & FINAL
- 32 NIGHTS ACCOMMODATION
- TRANSFERS TO & FROM THE AIRPORTS, HOTELS & STADIUMS BY LUXURY COACH
- FULLY ESCORTED

PACKAGE PRICE PER PERSON (TWIN SHARE)	*** TOURIST	**** SUPERIOR TOURIST
CATEGORY 3	$13,713.00	$15,053.00
Single Supplement	$2,560.00	$3,840.00

'SECOND ROUND' CHAMPIONSHIP

DEPART 26 JULY
27 JULY UNTIL 13 JULY
16 NIGHTS

DATE	MATCHES	PLACE
27/6/98	SECOND ROUND	MARSEILLE
29/6/98	SECOND ROUND	MONTPELLIER
30/6/98	SECOND ROUND	ST. ETTIENNE
03/7/98	QUARTER FINAL	PARIS - S.D.
04/7/98	QUARTER FINAL	LYON
07/7/98	SEMI FINAL	MARSEILLE
11/7/98	3 & 4 PLACE FINAL	PARIS - P.D.P.
12/7/98	FINAL	PARIS - S.D.

PACKAGE PER PERSON INCLUDES:
- RETURN ECONOMY AIRFARES
- 8 STADIUM TICKETS INCLUDING, 3 SECOND ROUND, 2 QUARTER FINALS, 1 SEMI FINAL, 3RD & 4TH PLACE & FINAL
- 16 NIGHTS ACCOMMODATION
- TRANSFERS TO & FROM THE AIRPORTS, HOTELS & STADIUMS BY LUXURY COACH
- FULLY ESCORTED

PACKAGE PRICE PER PERSON (TWIN SHARE)	*** TOURIST	**** SUPERIOR TOURIST
CATEGORY 3	$9,666.00	$10,306.00
Single Supplement	$1,280.00	$1,1920.00

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SOUTH AMERICA

— Compiled by Mario Etchart —

'THE PRINCE' FRANCESCOLI RETIRES

LEGEND OF URUGUAY CALLS IT A DAY

Enzo Francescoli, one of the most talented and skilful players in the world in the last thirty years has decided to retire from the game at the age of 36.

Francescoli was born in Montevideo, Uruguay, on November 12, 1961.

At senior level, he made his debut with Uruguayan First Division club Montevideo Wanderers. The same year he moved to Argentina to linkup with River Plate, but, in 1986, after winning his first Argentine league with the "Millionaires", and becoming the highest scorer, the brilliant attacking midfielder moved to France were he starred with Racing Matra and Olympic Marseille.

Another goal ... Enzo Francescoli celebrates.

Later he was transferred to Italian Serie A side Cagliari and ended his stint, in Italy, playing with Torino

After his European campaign, in 1994, he returned to Argentine giant River Plate where he won everything: three Argentine championships, the Libertadores Cup and the South American Supercup..

Back In 1981 he was a member of the Uruguayan U/20 squad that won the South American championship and later participated in the Youth World Cup held in Australia. Uruguay was one of the best teams of the competition but it was eliminated by Romania in the quarter finals.

Nobody who followed Uruguay during that

"River Plate has been my home for many years."

tournament will forget the oustanding qualities of the player who wore the number 10 shirt. According to many football experts who covered the U/20 championship, Francescoli was the best player of the tournament. ABSW's Aidan Ormond, who saw the tournament, believed Francescoli to be "the next Johan Cruyff" when he saw him in the early rounds.

In 1995 Enzo Francescoli achieved one of his most important dreams: he captained the Uruguayan national team that won the Copa Americao on his own homeground, defeating Brazil in a dramatic final decided by a penalty shootout at the historic Centenario stadium.

The Uruguayan star, who confessed to be a fan of Uruguayan giant Penarol, refused an offer from them to play in this year's Libertadores Cup.

Instead, he would like to play just one match with his beloved club alonside his idol, Fernando Morena, the highest scorter in the history of Uruguayan football, and, his former partner in the national U/20 side, Cagliari and Torino, Carlos Aguilera.

"When you are a little kid, your biggest dream is to play for one of the

Mr 100%: That is Enzo 'The Prince' Francescoli.

big clubs in the country and do in style at the Centenario stadium. It may be possible if Penarol allowed me to wear the gold and black shirt in an exhibition game with my idol Fernando Morena and Carlos Aguilera. It will be another dream come true," said an emotional Francescoli

"River Plate has been my home for many years. I had the fortune of playing alongside some of the greatest players in the world, like Norberto Alonso, Ariel Ortega, Marcelo Gallardo and Marcelo Salas, just to name a few. It will be something that I will treasure for the rest of my life, and is also very difficult leave a club who gave me everything," added the Uruguayan captain.

The future of Enzo Francescoli, better known in Argentina as 'The Prince', will be linked with football, as it has been all his life.

Who knows, he may be the next River Plate coach, or Penarol's or the Uruguayan national team.

Whatever he decides to do, we all know he will give his best ... like always.

MEXICO STRIKE GOLD

Mexico won the Concacaf Gold Cup after its dramatic 1-0 victory over the United States in the final played at Los Angeles Coliseum in front of 92,000 spectators.

Mexican international striker Luis Hernandez, who currently plays for Argentine giant Boca Juniors, scored the only goal of the match in the 42nd minute.

It was Mexico's third championship in the last five years, they won the competition in 1993 and 1996.

MEXICO: Perez, Pardo, Davino, Suarez, Carmona, Medina (67thLara), Villa, Ramirez (85 Alfaro), Blanco, Lozano (55 Luna), Hernandez.

USA: Keller, Pope, Burns, Agoos, Lalas (81 McBride), Harkes, Jones, Hedjuk (75 Reyna), Moore, Wegerle (46 Preki), Wynalda.

USA goalkeeper Kasey Keller, from Leicester City, was distinguished as the MVP of the championship.

AND IN OTHER NEWS ...

COLOMBIA'S SETBACK

The Colombian national team's build up for the World Cup in France sufferd a serious setback when it was beaten by Argentine side San Lorenzo, 2-0, in a friendly international played at Bogota in front of 38,000 fans.

Despite the loss, national coach Hector Dario Gomez was impressed with his players' performance, especially with Freddy Grisales, Giovanny Hernandez, Foad Mazziri, Arnulfo Vanetierra and Hamilton Ricard.

Gomez used 16 players during the match with the aim of testing some new faces.

Midfielder Nestor Gorosito opened the account in the 57th minute and striker Alberto Acosta, who returned to San Lorenzo after a stint with Chilean club Universidad Catolica, added the second two minutes later.

Colombia are not the only national team to suffer embarrassing defeats lately (Brazil??), so they should not worry too much.

COLOMBIA:
Miguel Calero, Flaminio Rivas, Osman Lopez, Alex Posada (46th Mario Yepes), Foad Mazziri, Jorge Bolanos (65th Elkin Murillo), Wilmer Cabrera (46th William Zapata), Giovanny Hernandez, Freddy Grisales (46th Jorge Salcedo), Arnulfo Vanetierra, Hamilton Ricard (46th Jorge Castillo).

SAN LORENZO:
Oscar Passet, Luiz Fernando, Ivan Ramiro Cordoba, Federico Lussendhoff, Damian Manusovic (88th Mario Escudero), Ariel Montenegro, Claudio Rivadero (83rd Mirko Saric), Fernando Galleto, Claudio Biaggio, Nestor Gorosito (80th Diego Figueroa), Alberto Acosta.

ARGENTINE SQUAD

Argentine national coach, Daniel Alberto Passarella, named the squad for the international friendlies against Romania and Yugoslavia.

Goalkeepers: German Burgos (River Plate) and Pablo Caballero (Velez Sarsfield)

Defenders: Hernan Diaz (River Plate), Roberto Ayala (Napoli, Italy), Roberto Sensini (Parma, Italy), Jose Chamot (Lazio, Italy), nelson Vivas (Lugano, Switzerland).

Midfielders: Leonardo Astrada (River Plate), Gustavo Zapata (San Lorenzo), Christian Bassedas (Velez Sarsfield), Juan Ramon Riquelme (Boca Juniors), Marcelo Gallardo (River Plate), Juan Veron (Sampdoria, Italy), Diego Simeone (Inter Milan, Italy).

Strikers: Marcelo Delgado (Racing Club), Ariel Ortega (Valencia, Spain), Hernan Crespo (Parma, Italy).

Pasasarella decided to give Gabriel Batistuta (Fiorentina, Italy), Carlos Roa (Majorca, Spain), Pablo Paz (Tenerife, Spin), Matias Almeyda (Lazio, Italy), Caludio Lopez (Valencia, Spain) and Javier Zanetti (Inter Milan, Italy) a break from duty.

Batistuta: Has been given a break by his national coach for the up-coming friendles.

CHILE DO THE BUSINESS

Chile returned to Santiago after a brilliant 2-0 victory over England at London's Wembley stadium. Coach Nelson Acosta said that "all our goals during the tour of Hong Kong, New Zealand, Australia and England were achieved.

"Now we have a much better knowledge of how our players can perform at the highest level in international football. Nevertheless, we have to keep working hard to build a strong team to do well in France 98. There is more work to be done and more players to watch during the next international matches."

The Chileans started their tour with two consecutive defeats against Hong Kong (3-1) and Iran (on penalties), followed by a 0-0 draw with New Zealand, a 1-0 victory over Australia and the well known 2-0 win against England.

UK Mail columnist Nigel Clarke, referring to the brilliant display of Marcelo Salas at the cathedral of football, said: "Salas' first goal was one of the greatest scored in the famous stadium.

"This performance from Salas will be remembered long after the old place has been rebuilt.

"Shearer and Owen were outshone by the Chilean young star as England tumbled to a shock defeat."

Salas will move to Lazio after the World Cup and will pick up A$700,000 a week.

Italian Affair

By Joe Russo

YOU ARE SACKED SIGNOR!

After only two weeks in the job Lecce have sacked their coach Angelo Pereni. He was in charge for three games, including a mid-week encounter.

Lecce, in that period, lost all three games, scored only one goal and conceded 14 goals. This has been fairly consistent with their form this year as they languish at the bottom of the Serie A table.

Pereni's replacement is Nedo Sonetti, who coached the club a couple of years ago. He has coached a few clubs in the Serie A with modest success.

Pereni wasn't given a fair go but life in the Serie A can be very cruel.

Meanwhile Serie B club Pescara have sacked their coach Viscidi and temporarily replaced him with their youth coach, Giuseppe Donatelli. Foggia, also in the Serie B, have sacked their coach Domenico Caso and a permanent replacement will be named shortly.

ANGLO-ITALIAN BUSINESS FLOURISHES

The exodus of Italian players from the Serie A continues and England appears to be a very comfortable home for many of them.

The latest to leave is Inter's Marco Branca, 33, who was having trouble securing a first-team place on a regular basis. Branca will join Bryan Robson's Middlesbrough (see page 22).

Branca has spent the last 30 months at Inter but made his Serie A debut back in 1986 with Udinese. He has also played for Sampdoria, Fiorentina and Parma.

His former club, Inter, must be laughing all the way to the bank as England's Premier League clubs pay exorbitant prices for players that are past their Serie A use by date.

Just over a month ago, Inter sold former Italian international Nicola Berti to Tottenham Hotspur and last year they sold Benito Carbone to Sheffield Wednesday, Alessandro Pistone to Newcastle and Gianluca Festa to Middlesbrough.

Inter and Juventus lead the way in selling players to UK clubs. Juventus in recent years have sold Gianluca Vialli (Chelsea), Fabbrizio Ravanelli (Middlesbrough), Sergio Porrini (Glasgow Rangers) and Michele Padavano and Attilio Lombardo (Crystal Palace).

It may be for this very reason their ability to know when to sell a player that is why both Juventus and Inter lead the Serie A ladder.

Maybe other clubs could learn from them?

VIALLI'S LUCKIEST BREAK

The mush publicised Chelsea affair in recent weeks, with Vialli taking over as player/manager, is surely the Italian's luckiest break in his career.

Vialli's career as a player is surely in its final years but to be given charge of one of the biggest Premier League clubs, without any coaching experience, is surely the most meteoric rise in many a year.

In Italy it would never have happened. Vialli would have had to serve his apprenticeship but now all that has been fast-tracked.

It may not be too far fetched to suggest that Vialli is a future Italian national coach in the making, if he produces the goods in the Premier League as manager, followed by possible success in the Serie A as coach and given his excellent playing background.

DEL PIERO'S TOP FORM

Alessandro Del Piero is in superb form for Juventus and now surely must be a certain starter in the national team for the World Cup, providing he keeps this form and remains injury free.

Del Piero's work for Juve is invaluable, not only does he score goals but creates a myriad of chances for his team-mates. In fact, after an ordinary season last year, he is back to his best form.

However, let's not forget that in Euro 96, former national coach Arrigo Sacchi didn't use him at all despite Del Piero being part of the squad.

Since then, he has struggled to consolidate a place in the national team but surely his form will silence his critics once and for all on the big stage.

TRANSFER GOSSIP

Italian daily papers, including the three daily sports papers 'La Gazzetta dello Sports', 'Il Corriere dello Sport' and 'Tuttosport', are full of transfer rumours and possible moves regarding players and coaches.

Among the many is one that linked former national coach Arrigo Sacchi to Inter. Sacchi's name has also been mentioned with Real Madrid and Paris Saint Germain. One thing is certain: Sacchi will not join Inter — current coach Gigi Simoni has had his contract extended.

Udinese's coach Alberto Zaccheroni has become hot property subsequent to the wonderful form of his team. Many have speculated that it is only a matter of time before he moves to a bigger club.

However this scenario is unlikely to happen next year. Zaccheroni is happy in the little north-eastern city of Udine and the pressure to perform there is much less than it would be in Milan, Turin or Rome.

Fiorentina have also confirmed their coach Alberto Malesani for next year after a fairly good debut year this season.

Unfortunately though, they look very likely to lose their captain and star striker Gabriel Batistuta to Inter.

Finally, Christian Panucci, the 25-year old Italian defender is likely to remain at current club Real Madrid. Panucci is hoping to be in Italy's line-up come France 98.

STALLIONS OVERSEAS

Last Thursday night, Marconi's youth team returned home to Sydney following a disappointing showing in the Coppa di Carnevale in Viareggio (near beautiful Tuscany).

It was the the 50th edition of this very prestigious youth soccer tournament which comprised 30 teams, including some of the best club teams worldwide.

Marconi suffered three losses — 2-3 to Bologna, 0-2 to Torino and 0-3 to Savoia.

The worst result must surely be the last one as Savoia are in Italy's Third Division. Let's hope that the experience did Lee Sterrey's boys good.

Meanwhile, after playing a friendly game against a Zurich team, Serie A strugglers Empoli have not signed Marconi's Sean Babic.

Coach Luciano Spalletti was apparently not that impressed, but with closer ties being forged between Empoli and Marconi, there is always next year.

Only problem is that Empoli could well be in the Serie B then!

The next games in Serie A are:

Atalanta v Lazio
Bologna — Parma
Empoli — Udinese
Inter — Napoli
Juventus — Bari
Lecce — Milan
Piacenza — Sampdoria
Roma — Fiorentina
Vicenza — Brescia

Euro Trekking

GERMANY

Duisburg ended giant-killing Eintracht Trier's run in the German Cup by beating the south German amateurs after a penalty shoot-out.

The win means Duisburg will meet Bayern Munich for an all First Division Final in May.

Duisburg had gone ahead with a 51st-minute strike from Michael Zeyer, and looked assured of a smooth passage into the final, until Trier bounced back two minutes from the end with an equaliser from striker Dirk Fengler.

After a goalless 30 minutes of extra-time, Duisburg won a tense penalty shoot-out 10-9 after Trier goalkeeper Daniel Ischdonat, whose turn had come to take a penalty, failed to convert.

The defeat marked the end for Trier of a cup run in which their victims included European Cup winners Borussia Dortmund.

"We took on the fight and battled valiantly to the end. Now we can concentrate fully on promotion," Trier coach Karl-Heinz Emig said of his side's continuing league campaign.

Meanwhile, Germany kicked off their build-up to the World Cup with an easy 2-0 victory over Oman in a friendly .

The Germans controlled the proceedings for most of the game and went ahead in the 26th minute when skipper Jurgen Kohler scored from a Thomas Hessler corner kick.

Joerg Heinrich elegantly deflected another corner from Hessler for the second goal in the 61st minute, and the Germans could have scored again, but for some stout defending from Omani goalkeeper Awadh Subeit.

The Omanis had a chance to reduce the margin towards the end but a neat shot from Mohammed Hashim Salem just sailed over the bar.

The Germans, who are drawn against Iran, Yugoslavia and the United States for the World Cup group matches in June, played without striker Jurgen Klinsmann, who has a broken jaw, and key players from Bayern Munich, who stayed at home for a German Cup semi-final match.

FRANCE

Warned he had two matches in which to restore pride at ailing Paris St Germain and keep his job, Brazilian coach Ricardo, attempts to complete his mission successfully.

Heeding club president Michel Denisot's warning after PSG lost their last four league matches, Ricardo's team pulled off a French League Cup 1-0 win over Metz.

Acknowledging the need for another fine performance in the league against Guingamp last weekend, Ricardo said: "I'm half saved. I hope everything will be alright after Guingamp."

Halfway through his recovery mission, the Brazilian has all the more reason to be satisfied as some of the players drafted in against Metz produced convincing performances.

"For me, Pierre Ducrocq and Edouard Cisse have deserved a second chance in the league," he said.

After losing 1-0 at home to Nantes, PSG decided to omit players such as midfielder Bruno Ngotty and Jerome Leroy, blamed for not trying hard enough. Cisse and Ducrocq seized the opportunity to shine.

Goalkeeper Christophe Revault was also kept on the bench after a series of blunders, and his place again goes to Vincent Fernandez against Guingamp.

"I liked Vincent's performance against Metz. He is in good form even though Christophe Revault is improving daily in training," Ricardo said.

SPAIN

Brazilian midfielder Juninho voiced his support for the four-game ban given to the defender who broke his leg.

"It should serve as an example," said Juninho, who was speaking for the first time since the suspension of Celta Vigo's Spanish U/21 international Michel Salgado was announced.

"It should always be like that, if not football becomes a joke."

Juninho's comments came as the controversy over the February 1 incident grew.

Some 6,000 Celta fans took to the streets of Vigo to protest against the ban, while players from all over Spain have expressed their disagreement with the decision.

Many commentators feel that Salgado — who was neither booked nor sent off for the challenge — would not have been sanctioned at all if Juninho had not been such a high-profile player.

Juninho could be out of action until June, seriously threatening his hopes of playing in the World Cup in France.

Struggling Tenerife fired manager Artur Jorge, just three days before facing Spanish league leaders Real Madrid.

Jose Manuel Lillo will replace Jorge, the former Oporto manager who took over from Victor Fernandez earlier in the season.

Tenerife, UEFA Cup semi-finalists last season, are currently second-from-bottom in the Spanish First Division.

DENMARK

Danish champions Brondby IF said defender Brian Jensen would return to the club.

Brondby IF said they had bought the 29-year-old Danish defender from French side Cannes for 300,000 French francs ($49,000) on a contract which would run until June 2000.

Before leaving Brondby for French club Rennes in 1995, Jensen played 149 games for Brondby. He has made six appearances for Denmark's national team.

BELGIUM/ HOLLAND

PSV Eindhoven are understood to want Club Bruges' Eric Gerets to fill the coaching vacancy that will be left by the departure of Dick Advocaat.

But they face a struggle if they wish him to sign this year.

Advocaat announced on Monday he would be leaving PSV for Glasgow Rangers in the summer. No successor has yet been named.

Previously, PSV chairman Harry van Raaij mooted Gerets and Schalke coach Huub Stevens as would-be replacements. But in December Stevens signed a new contract to stay with the German side until 2001.

Gerets, 43, would appear be an ideal man for the PSV job. He led Lierse to the Belgian league title last season before moving to Bruges, who have yet to lose in the league.

He has also not hidden his affection for PSV where he played from the late 1980s.

"I am charmed by the interest. I have never made a secret of the fact that I would like to be trainer at PSV," he remarked.

"The only problem is the timing.

"I have a contract with Club Bruges and it is my nature to respect contracts. But emotionally speaking I would rather leave for PSV today than tomorrow."

Club Bruges are unequivocal that Gerets will not be allowed to go until his contract runs out in mid-1999.

"There is absolutely no question of that," said club secretary Jacques de Nolf.

Then there is the additional problem that he lacks the necessary Dutch coaching certificate. As a former international Gerets could apply for the fast-track one year course.

But the next starting date would be this August. That would leave him unavailable until the end of next season.

A PSV spokesman stated: "At the moment, it's all rumours. We are looking (for a coach) and when we have decided, we will come out and say, Eric Gerets is one of the candidates."

Another may be Ronald Koeman who will have finished the Dutch FA's coaching course by the summer.

And the others? "Huub Stevens and maybe Ruud Gullit," said the spokesman.

Weird & Wonderful

By Stuart Jones

1955-56

Matt Busby managed Manchester United to the Division One championship in 1956. His youngsters were undefeated at home (drawing only three times) and finishing 11 points clear of Blackpool. Instrumental in their success was Tommy Taylor's 25 goals, the centre forward who lost his life in the Munich air disaster of 1958.

Second-placed Blackpool scored a greater number of goals than United, yet lost six games more than the top side, conceding 11 extra goals. Wolves finished third, equal on points with Blackpool. To complete Lancashire's almost clean sweep of places one to four, Manchester City ended in fourth place.

In the bottom four, teams with strong footballing histories were caught in a big battle to avoid relegation. By April 13 Preston had finally fought off any mathematical chance of going down, leaving the other three with three games to go.

It looked as though Sheffield United would also make it. The table read: Preston 36, Sheff United 32, Villa 29, Huddersfield 29. However, on April 14 Aston Villa defeated United 3-2, and 'The Blades' picked up only one point from their remaining two games.

Villa defeated Preston (North End losing to Wolves the previous week meant they missed relegation by only a point) and Huddersfield defeated Charlton and Tottenham. By April 27 the table read: North End 36, Villa 33, Huddersfield 33, Sheff. United 32. Villa defeated near neighbours West Brom 3-0, thus relegating Huddersfield (who had beaten Bolton 3-1) on goal percentage, and Sheffield United.

For 'The Blades' it was a double blow, with city rivals Sheffield Wednesday being promoted as champions of Division Two, in the process scoring over 100 goals in 42 games, thanks to men like Roy Shiner. Also from Yorkshire, Leeds United reached the top flight as runners-up. Four teams, including Liverpool, finished equal in third place on 48 points. At the bottom Plymouth and Hull were relegated.

Division Three saw Grimsby as clear northern champions, and Leyton Orient saw off Brighton by a point to take out the southern crown. Crewe and Swindon Town finished bottom of each section respectively. Top goal scorers in the league that season were Nat Lofthouse in Division One (33 goals for Bolton), W. Gardiner in the Second (34 goals for Leicester City), R. Crosbie in Division Three North (36 goals for Grimsby Town) and R. Collins in the south (40 goals for Torquay United).

To complete Lancashire's dominance of the season in England, Manchester City represented the area in the semi-finals of the FA Cup, defeating Tottenham by the odd goal in the first semi-final, with Birmingham victorious 3-0 over Sunderland in the other game.

City had been defeated 3-1 in the previous year's Final and were looking for revenge, but over a different foe in the side from the midlands. For the seventh successive Final, the crowd figure was over 100,000 at Wembley.

Lancashire cricketer Jack Dyson contributed one of Manchester City's three goals, the other two coming from Hayes and Johnstone. Kinsey scored for Birmingham, but the Midlands side could not overcome their rivals' short passing game, a style described as similar to that of the great Hungarian side of the time. Perhaps the most infamous episode of the game came fifteen minutes from the end when Bert Trautmann went low for a ball and his head was collected by the leg of Birmingham's Murphy. Trautmann, a former German paratrooper, played the remaining fifteen minutes with a broken neck, and remains a hero to those in the Kippax Stand (and all other City supporters) to this day.

After losing their three best players on season's eve, and then losing their trainer-coach to Dundee early on in the season, it looked as though Guildford City's fans would be set for another disappointing term. Instead, Bill Thompson took over and by winning their penultimate game 4-3, the team wrapped up the Southern League title for the first time since the War.

Cheltenham Town were runners-up whilst at the bottom, Bath City propped up the table. Merthyr Tydfil had the most dramatic drop of all, missing out on bottom spot on goal percentage, a calamity for the most successful team over the previous ten years in the Southern League.

For all members, for the first time, the Southern League Cup was compulsory, and Yeovil took a 4-1 lead into the second-leg of the Final against Gloucester City. Fidler scored for Yeovil, making it 5-1, before Gloucester stormed back, scoring four goals to tie the match at 5-5. Extra-time saw Gloucester's Bob Coldray score his second goal of the match to complete one of the greatest comebacks in the game's history.

Rangers dominated the League in Scotland and finished four points clear of Aberdeen, with Hearts in third spot, equal on points with neighbours Hibernian. At the bottom, Clyde were relegated along with Stirling Albion, who finally went down after avoiding it last time around due to the newly expanded Division A.

In Division B, Queens Park finished three points clear of Ayr United, but both teams went up. After coming awfully close in the past, Montrose finished bottom of the league for the first time in their history.

In the Scottish League Cup Final Aberdeen defeated St Mirren 2-1 to lift the Cup for the first time. The players returned to Aberdeen, after their Hampden Park success, to a tour of the city with jubilant fans spilling over on to the pavements.

The Scottish FA Cup saw Celtic defeat Clyde 2-1 in one semi-final, and Hearts defeated Raith Rovers in a replay 3-0 in the other semi.

The Final, at Hampden Park, saw Hearts victorious by a scoreline of three goals to one over Celtic.

Sadly for Celtic fans, of three successive Finals, the 'Green and Whites' had come out on top only once.

Around Europe the Champions were:

Austria: SK Rapid Wien
Belgium: RSC Anderlecht (Cup - Racing Tournai)
Bulgaria: CDNA Sofia (Cup - Dinamo Sofia)
France: OGC Nice (Cup - FC Sedan)
East Germany: Wismut K-M-S (Cup - Chemie Halle)
West Germany: Borussia Dortmund (Cup - Karlsruher SC)
Holland: Rapid JC Heerlen
Italy: AC Fiorentina
Poland: CWKS Warszawa (Cup double)
Portugal: FC Porto (Cup double)
Romania: CCA Bucuresti (Cup - Progresul Oradea)
Russia: Spartak Moskva
Spain: Club Atletico De Bilbao (Cup double)
Sweden: IFK Norrkoping
Switzerland: Grasshopper-Club Zurich (Cup double)

ENGLAND

LEAGUE TABLES

DIVISION 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	42	18	3	0	51	20	7	7	7	32	31	60
B'pool	42	13	4	4	56	27	7	5	9	30	35	49
Wolves	42	15	2	4	51	27	5	7	9	38	38	49
Man City	42	11	5	5	40	27	5	7	9	42	42	46
Arsenal	42	13	4	4	38	22	5	6	10	22	39	46
B'ham	42	12	4	5	51	26	6	5	10	24	31	45
Burnley	42	11	3	76	37	20	7	5	9	27	34	44
Bolton	42	13	3	5	50	24	5	4	12	21	34	43
Sun'land	42	10	8	3	44	36	7	1	13	36	59	43
Luton	42	12	4	5	44	27	5	4	12	22	37	42
Newcastle	42	12	4	5	49	24	5	3	13	36	46	41
P'mouth	42	9	8	4	46	38	7	1	13	32	47	41
WBA	42	13	3	5	37	25	5	2	14	21	45	41
Charlton	42	13	2	6	47	26	4	4	13	28	55	40
Everton	42	11	5	5	37	29	4	5	12	18	40	40
Chelsea	42	10	4	7	32	26	4	7	10	32	51	39
Cardiff	42	11	4	6	36	32	4	5	12	19	37	39
Tot'ham	42	9	4	8	37	33	6	3	12	24	38	37
Preston	42	6	5	10	32	36	8	3	10	41	36	36
A Villa	42	9	6	6	32	29	2	7	12	20	40	35
Huds'field	42	9	4	8	32	30	5	3	13	22	53	35
Sheff Utd	42	8	6	7	31	36	4	3	14	32	42	33

DIVISION 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sheff Wed	42	13	5	3	60	28	8	8	5	41	34	55
Leeds	42	17	3	1	51	18	6	3	12	29	42	52
L'pool	42	14	3	4	52	25	7	3	11	33	38	48
B'burn	42	13	4	4	55	29	8	2	11	29	36	48
Leicester	42	15	3	3	63	23	6	3	12	31	55	48
Bristol R	42	13	3	5	53	33	8	3	10	31	37	48
N Forest	42	9	5	7	30	26	10	4	7	38	37	47
Lincoln	42	14	5	2	49	17	4	5	12	30	48	46
Fulham	42	15	2	4	59	27	5	4	12	30	52	46
Swansea	42	14	4	3	49	23	6	2	13	34	58	46
Bristol C	42	14	4	3	49	20	5	3	[illegible]	31	44	45
Port Vale	42	12	4	5	38	21	4	9	8	22	37	45
Stoke	42	13	2	6	47	27	7	2	12	24	35	44
Mid'boro	42	11	4	6	46	31	5	4	12	30	47	40
Bury	42	9	5	7	44	39	7	3	11	42	51	40
West Ham	42	12	4	5	52	27	2	7	12	22	42	39
Doncaster	42	11	5	5	46	30	1	6	14	24	66	36
Barnsley	42	10	5	6	33	35	1	7	13	14	49	34
Rotherham	42	7	5	9	29	34	5	4	12	27	41	33
Notts Cty	42	8	5	8	39	37	3	4	14	16	45	31
Plymouth	42	7	6	8	33	25	3	2	16	21	62	28
Hull	42	8	4	11	32	45	4	2	15	21	52	26

DIVISION THREE NORTH

Grimsby Town 68, Derby County 63, Accrington Stanley 59, Hartlepools United 57, Southport 57, Chesterfield 54, Stockport County 51, Bradford City 49, Scunthorpe United 48, Workington 47, York City 47, Rochdale 47, Gateshead 45, Wrexham 42, Darlington 41, Tranmere Rovers 41, Chester 40, Mansfield Town 39, Halifax Town 39, Oldham Athletic 38, Carlisle United 38, Barrow 33, Bradford 33, Crewe Alexandra 28.

DIVISION THREE SOUTH

Leyton Orient 66, Brighton & Hove Albion 65, Ipswich Town 64, Southend United 53, Torquay United 52, Brentford 52, Norwich City 51, Coventry City 49, Bournemouth 48, Gillingham 48, Northampton Town 47, Colcester 47, Shrewsbury Town 46, Southampton 44, Aldershot 40, Exeter City 40, Reading 39, QPR 39, Newport County 39, Walsall 38, Watford 37, Millwall 36, Crystal Palace 34, Swindon Town 30.

SOUTHERN LEAGUE

Guildford City 60, Cheltenham Town 56, Yeovil Town 55, Brentford Town 51, Dartford 49, Weymouth 48, Gloucester City 47, Lovell's Athletic 47, Chelmsford City 46, Kettering Town 43, Exeter City Res 43, Gravesend & Northfleet 42, Hereford United 41, Hastings United 40, Headington United 40, Kidderminster Harriers 35, Llanelly 34, Barry Town 33, Worcester City 33, Tonbridge 33, Merthyr Tydfil 24, Bath City 24.

SCOTLAND

DIVISION A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	34	22	8	4	85	27	52
Aberdeen	34	18	10	6	87	50	46
Hearts	34	19	7	8	00	47	45
Hibernian	34	19	7	8	86	50	45
Celtic	34	16	9	9	55	39	41
Queen Sth	34	18	5	13	69	73	37
Airdrie	34	14	8	12	85	96	36
Kilmarnock	34	12	10	12	52	45	34
Partick	34	13	7	14	62	60	33
Motherwell	34	11	11	12	53	59	33
Raith R	34	12	9	13	58	75	33
East Fife	34	13	5	16	61	69	31
Dundee	34	12	6	16	56	65	30
Falkirk	34	11	6	17	58	75	28
St Mirren	34	10	7	17	57	70	27
Dunf'line	34	10	6	18	42	82	26
Clyde	34	8	6	20	50	74	22
Stirling A	34	4	5	25	23	82	13

DIVISION B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Queens Pk	36	23	8	5	78	28	54
Ayr Utd	36	24	3	9	103	55	51
St Johnstone	36	21	7	8	86	45	49
Dumbarton	36	21	5	10	83	62	47
Stenhousemuir	36	20	4	12	82	54	44
Brechin	36	18	6	12	60	56	42
Cowdenbeath	36	16	7	13	80	85	39
Dundee U	36	12	14	10	78	65	38
Morton	36	15	6	15	71	69	36
T Lanark	36	16	3	17	80	64	35
Hamilton	36	13	7	16	86	84	33
Stranraer	36	14	5	17	77	92	33
Alloa	36	12	7	17	67	73	31
Berwick	36	11	9	16	52	77	31
Forfar	36	10	9	17	62	75	29
E Stirling	36	9	10	17	66	94	28
Albion R	36	8	11	17	58	82	27
Arbroath	36	10	6	20	47	67	26
Montrose	36	4	3	29	44	133	11

UK STORIES

By Micky Brock

Rumours abound that Ian Rush is on his way from Newcastle to Sheffield United on a free-transfer and Jan Fjortoft may sue his former club after a public attack on him by the First Division club's chief executive Charles Green.

ABOU FINE AND BAN

West Ham striker Samassi Abou has been fined $2,200 and given an extra one-match ban by the Football Association for his altercation with referee David Elleray last month.

ENGLAND v ITALY

The Football League will play the Italian League Serie B on March 10 in a representative match at The Valley. The English side, which will feature Under/21 players, will be managed by Charlton's Alan Curbishley.

BARNET INQUIRY

Barnet's plans for a multi-sports complex, which include a 10,000 all-seater football stadium, are to go before a Department of Environment public inquiry. The proposed site around the club's ground at Underhill includes Green Belt land.

HAMMERS REJECT OFFER

West Ham director of football Peter Storrie today rejected Everton's $4.5 million bid for captain Steve Lomas.

OWLS CLINCH SEDLOSKI

Croatian club Hajduk Split have accepted a new offer from Sheffield Wednesday for Macedonian international centre-half Goce Sedloski.

LAUDRUP TO JOIN CHELSEA

Brian Laudrup will join Chelsea on July 1 after agreeing to a three-year contract.

Chelsea have also lined-up a $9 million-plus deal for Didier Deschamps, the brilliant midfield player who will captain France in the World Cup Finals this summer.

CITIZENS' ROYLE REVIVAL

Joe Royle is promising a Maine Road revolution as he launches his Manchester City managerial career.

Joe Royle stepped back into the dirty, devious world of football managership and denied most strongly that he had 'done the dirty' on long-time friend Frank Clark.

Clark headed out of Maine Road in disgust after learning, from the radio, that his 13-month reign as manager had ended.

HUGHES WARNS BORO

Mark Hughes saluted new Chelsea player-manager Gianluca Vialli and warned Wembley opponents Middlesbrough what to expect on March 29.

(Full match report on page 22)

The news led one journalist to pen: After the birth, Luca, Ken and child are doing well.

It was a quiet night down at the Bridge. All right, I suppose there was the aftermath of Ruud Gullit's departure, the fact that it was Gianluca Vialli's first game in charge, that a Wembley Cup Final place hinged on the result and that it was a London derby!

As a coronation it couldn't have been better scripted with Gianluca Vialli presenting his ecstatic followers with a day out at Wembley as he ascended graciously to the throne of Ruud Gullit.

Mark Hughes

ENGLAND

TRANSFER/LOANS

Player	From	To	Cost
Callum Davidson	St Johnstone	Blackburn R	$4m
Matthew Jansen	Carlisle Utd	C Palace	$2.2m
Wayne Burnett	Huddersfield T	Grimsby T	$220,000
John Hills	Everton	Blackpool	$200,000
Jon Connelly	Ipswich T	Albion R	Free
Anthony Elliott	Cardiff C	Scarborough	Free
Guy Branston	Leicester C	Colchester Utd	Loan
Jonathan O'Connor	Everton	Sheffield Utd	Loan
John Cornforth	Wycombe W	Peterborough Utd	Loan
Nigel Gleghorn	Burnley	Northampton T	Loan
Stig Johansen	Southampton	Bristol C	Loan
Michael Mahoney-Johnson	QPR	WBA	Loan
Andrew Melville	Sunderland	Bradford	Loan
John Mullin	Sunderland	Preston NE	Loan
Anthony Parks	Burnley	Doncaster R	Loan
Wayne Phillips	Wrexham	Stockport Cty	Loan
Anthony Philliskirk	Cardiff C	Macclesfield	Loan
Richard Huxford	Burnley	Dunfermline	Loan

PALACE SIGN MILANO PLAYER

Crystal Palace have strengthened their Italian connection by signing, on a month's trial, midfield player Patricio Billio from Serie A giants AC Milan

Terry Venables

VENBLES OFFERED DEAL

Terry Venables has been offered a new contract by Australia — but is undecided about committing his future to the Socceroos. (Could Rangers, or some other high-powered European club tempt him away?).

ASHBY SLAMS 'CHEAT' CLAIM

Referee Gerald Ashby has slammed newspaper reports which claimed he had called Tottenham midfielder Stephen Clemence a cheat.

REVELLING BECK

Mikkel Beck hailed Middlesbrough's first half blitz of Liverpool, which booked their latest ticket to Wembley, as the best they have played.

(Full match report on page 22).

'POOL LOAN KEEPER

Liverpool reserve goalkeeper Jorgen Nielsen has joined Danish First Division club Ikast on loan, until the end of the season, in a bid for a place in Denmark's World Cup Finals squad.

HUDSON FIGHTS BACK

Chelsea legend Alan Hudson is winning his fight for life after being knocked down by a car on December 15.

BASSETT KNOCKS 'WHINGERS'

Dave Bassett has slammed whingeing Nottingham Forest fans for failing to get behind his promotion-chasing side and said: "Perhaps they've got a death wish."

BULL GOES FOR RECORD

Wolves club captain Steve Bull scored his 300th goal for the Molineux outfit, and then set his sights on taking his tally to 350.

Bull appeared as a 74th-minute substitute and scored a dramatic last-minute decider in the 2-1 home win over Bradford City.

He described his latest landmark effort as "just another goal", but added: "One day, I will think back and say 'well done' to myself. I was wearing a T-shirt with 300 on it so I was aware it was a milestone goal as I took my jersey off."

He added: "But the most important thing of all is the three points. I know I will score goals because I'm a natural scorer but it has been a long wait.

"I will make my next target 325 or 350 but who knows what might happen? I might have another few dozen goals in my boots or it might all end tomorrow."

Bull had not played since November 8 because of a knee injury that required an operation and he is likely to remain on the subs bench for Saturday's trip to Huddersfield.

Wolves manager Mark McGhee said: "It was an indisciplined performance by us, especially in the second half but when you have someone like Bully at the club, that is the sort of thing that can happen."

MACARI LOSES

Former Celtic manager Lou Macari has lost his $900,000 damages claim against the club, which he claimed, had acted in breach of contract by sacking him in 1994.

After the judgment was issued at the Court of Session in Edinburgh, Macari said in a statement: "Obviously I am hugely disappointed."

LAUDRUP - '10 OUT OF 10'

Brian Laudrup is determined to help Rangers secure a record 10th successive title.

The dynamic Dane, who will officially join Chelsea on July 1, is anxious to give his Ibrox boss Walter Smith the gift they both crave most of all, stating:

"Hopefully I can finish on a high with Rangers. I will always have great memories of my time with the club.

"I will do all in my power to help them win a record 10th successive title before I leave. Setting a record would go some way repaying the debt I feel I owe them for the way they have treated me and my family so well."

He continued: "We will always be friends. Rangers have given me four wonderful years. Walter Smith gave me freedom to play on the park and freedom off it as well. I will always be grateful to him.

"I have always tried to play to the best of my ability to try to entertain the Rangers supporters the way they would have wanted.

"Chelsea like to entertain as well. They have an attractive style of play, which was a major factor in joining them.

"I spoke to David Murray (Rangers chairman) and Walter yesterday and explained my decision to leave. Rangers wanted me to stay but they said they accepted and respected that decision.

"I want to play in the English Premiership and that is what attracted me to Chelsea. They are obviously ambitious but they are also extremely nice people."

SCOTS TO HELP ENGLAND??

Craig Brown has confirmed Scotland will travel to America to complete their World Cup preparations.

The Scots will face Colombia on May 24 in New York and the USA on May 30 in Washington.

Meanwhile former Celtic boss Tommy Burns will take charge of the B squad to play Wales on March 24 and will be assisted by current Celtic number two Murdo MacLeod.

Brown said: "I anticipate two very difficult games for us, which will be good work-outs for the players.

"Colombia are a South American side and, although they are not as good as Brazil, they did finish top of their qualifying group.

"It will be good to play against this style of team because at the moment Brazil are our number one priority.

"We played Colombia before Euro 96, when we lost 1-0, and we had a very tough game that day with a few hard tackles flying about. I hope we will have another tough game, but in a footballing sense.

"And, of course, we will be helping Glenn Hoddle out because Colombia are in England's group."

Scots helping the English? Whatever next?!?

DUNDEE UNITED THROUGH

Lars Zetterlund steered Dundee United into the quarter-finals of the Scottish Cup after a dramatic night at Inverness Caledonian.

Zetterland struck in the 108th minute to earn United a money-spinning home tie against Celtic in the next round.

But it was so nearly a 'Highland of Dreams' as the Second Division side never gave up the fight and took the game into extra-time.

Premier Division Dundee had looked home and dry after pulling 2-0 ahead, with six minutes to go, when substitute Gary McSwegan scored.

Kjell Olofsson had opened United's account but spurred on by a record crowd of 5,821 Inverness roared back.

Brian Thomson reduced the deficit with five minutes to go and right on the stroke of full-time Mark McCulloch grabbed a dramatic equaliser with a spectacular shot from the edge of the area.

United clinched a match in the last eight when Zetterlund, recalled to the starting line-up, scored in the 108th minute.

The Inverness players trooped sadly off at the end, but they went out of the Cup with their heads held high, and manager Steve Paterson can be proud of his troops.

COCA COLA CUP

FORM REVERSAL AT THE BRIDGE

Chelsea 3
Hughes 10
Di Matteo 51
Petrescu 53

Arsenal 1
Bergkamp 82p

Agg: Chelsea win 4-3

Gianluca Vialli did in his first game what it took Ruud Gullit a season to achieve — Chelsea are at Wembley for a Cup Final courtesy of the thrashing they handed out to Arsenal.

No-one who truly values style and such dramatic signings as Ruud Gullit managed — not to mention an FA Cup win — will ever forget the Dutchman, but Vialli's reign has started in a fashion which will make him a legend.

Brilliant goals, a team performance of bristling aggression and a masterful night from Vialli himself relit the touch paper which had gone out at Stamford Bridge recently — and the effect was explosive.

The first-half, during which Mark Hughes rewarded his new boss for not being dropped with the opening goal, had contained six bookings. But two minutes into the second half Patrick Vieira was sent-off for his second booking, a foul on Graeme Le Saux, and Arsenal's goose was cooked.

Moments later, Hughes gobbled up possession from David Platt and Roberto Di Matteo burst forward to launch a brilliant shot into the top corner.

Chelsea were not just dominant, they were having a carnival and a lovely move between Vialli, Hughes and Gianfranco Zola led to a corner conceded by Gilles Grimandi.

Zola took it, Frank Leboeuf tried to flick on but possession glanced out to the edge of the area, where Dan Petrescu beat Tony Adams, dummied Lee Dixon and calmly slipped the third goal past goalkeeper Alex Manninger. They had been two wonderful goals and Chelsea were at Wembley in style — something which had not been hinted at during the first-half.

Dennis Bergkamp's penalty eight minutes from time merely served as a consolation for Arsenal.

If battle lines had not been drawn after a century ot rivalry and three consecutive Arsenal victories this season, they were by the fifth minute of this muscular match.

Hughes was booked for a foul on Vieira, having already mixed it with both Adams and Grimandi. The Welshman had spent the day at the Palace — Buckingham not Crystal — collecting his MBE but Purple Hearts would have been appropriate.

The build-up to his tremendous 10th minute goal began with Nicolas Anelka catching Graeme Le Saux late enough for a stretcher to be summoned. Anelka escaped a booking but Arsenal team-mate Dixon was cautioned for clattering into Zola.

Chelsea, a goal down from the first-leg, levelled the tie after when Zola's free-kick was only partly cleared, the ball ricocheted off Di Matteo and Hughes swivelled instinctively to crash the ball past Manninger. The pile of blue and white bodies which instantly engulfed the scorer was inevitable but the picture told the tale of a much more cohesive, unified performance which Chelsea produced from the off.

When Le Saux had gone down there was a posse of Chelsea players remonstrating with the assistant referee — while the tendency might be regrettable, it is the truth that those who stick together win together.

But unity was not all there was to admire. Individuals had started to take responsibility for the team performance which was always going to be the key to whether Chelsea could compete with this impressive Arsenal unit.

Twice in the opening twenty minutes, once in the penalty box for a corner and once about 15 yards into midfield, Duberry came up with terrific tackles on Dennis Bergkamp.

Perhaps even more significantly was when Anelka tried to go around Leboeuf in almost identical territory to where the opening goal of the first-leg was scored. The defender coped without problem.

The player-manager, too, was having a grand old first-half. Tracking back he came up with blocks on Bergkamp and Parlour and up in attack he harassed Tony Adams into giving away a free-kick near the corner flag. The kick was wasted but that was not to undermine the trademark performance which Vialli was producing.

He is no longer young enough, neither are his legs, to devour turf in defence and attack for ninety minutes, but the home side needed an inspirational early period if the semi-final was not to drift away from them.

At 1-0 nothing was safe, in fact Arsenal were probably quite untroubled given their impressive counter-attacking skills but there was Vialli, taking the ball off sleepy Lee Dixon's toes, slamming in crosses to test the inexperienced keeper and, more often than not, playing as an auxiliary left midfielder when Ray Parlour or Dixon needed closing down.

Clarke re-started the deluge of bookings with a quite calculated trip on Marc Overmars as the Dutchman flicked the ball past him and attempted to speed away.

Sixty seconds later it was Parlour taking the legs from underneath the aggrieved Dennis Wise right under the firm eye of referee Graham Poll, which took the count to four.

Five minutes before the half-time break there was again two cards in sixty seconds as Vieira charged into Di Matteo and then Adams was cautioned for a needless trip in midfield.

By then the booking count was 4-2 to Arsenal which betrayed the visitors' anxiety rather than the flow of the game because Chelsea were playing much more tightly on their opposite numbers.

Vialli's straightforward 4-4-2 selection endorsed that but aside from picking himself, the other glaringly obvious change was that Chelsea 'pressed' as they have not done for months.

Suddenly Petrescu, who had been a miserable failure in the first game, looked dangerous and effective, Le Saux sharpened up his act and Vialli played as he had once done with Juventus when they hustled the whole of Europe out of the way en-route to winning the Champions' Cup.

It was too much for the half-fit Parlour who departed before half-time and was replaced by David Platt.

AUSSIE INTO FINAL

Middlesbrough 2
Merson 2p
Branca 4

Liverpool 0

Agg: Middlesbrough win 3-2

Middlesbrough shocked Liverpool and sent their own fans into raptures with two devastating strikes in the first four minutes which propelled them into the Coca-Cola Cup Final for the second year running.

First, after two minutes, Paul Merson wiped out the visitors' 2-1 advantage from the semi-final first-leg with a penalty, when Jamie Carragher sent Mikkel Beck tumbling in the area.

Then, after just over another 60 seconds the experience turned into a nightmare for the men who currently hold second place in the Premiership, and a dream for Middlesbrough's latest import Marco Branca.

Manager Bryan Robson announced after completing the $2.5 million purchase from Inter Milan that the 33-year-old striker would have to wait for his debut.

But he had a big surprise up his sleeve by throwing him straight into the action against Liverpool — and Branca had an even bigger one up his as he took only three minutes to hit his first goal in English football.

Liverpool manager Roy Evans talked before the game of recent defensive frailties and his attempted repairs, a reversion to a back three with Jamie Carragher on the right of Dominic Matteo, Steve Harkness on the left and Patrik Berger and Stig Bjornebye recalled to midfield, did not work and there were again major leaks.

Beck exploited the first, running strongly into the area before being brought down by Carragher.

Referee Paul Durkin had no hesitation pointing to the spot and Merson, scorer of Boro's fine first-leg goal, stepped forward to drive low and hard into the net.

There was scarcely time to draw another breath before Middlesbrough went two up on the night and ahead on aggregate. Merson lofted the ball forward, Branca moved sharply on to it and hit a low shot that went between the legs of the despairing David James.

Liverpool could hardly have been more surprised. Captain Paul Ince, who recommended Branca to Robson, even expressed relief on the eve of the contest that he would not be facing his former Inter team-mate.

The two clubs are far apart on the honours list, in fact, Middlesbrough don't even feature on it as far as the top prizes of the English game are concerned. Liverpool top it.

But over the past year Boro have been nearer to winning something than their illustrious opponents. They reached the final of this competition last season, knocking out Liverpool on the way, before falling to Leicester in a Hillsborough replay. They also reached the FA Cup Final, only to be beaten by Chelsea.

Liverpool's defeat at the Riverside in last year's quarter-final was warning enough. Even more so was the experience from the first leg of this semi-final at Anfield.

Liverpool had not won since the first leg, drawing and losing at home to Blackburn and Southampton and drawing at Sheffield Wednesday. They had also suffered a number of injury blows, with Jamie Redknapp forced to undergo knee surgery the day after that first game, Jason McAteer then broke his leg against Blackburn and Phil Babb was out with an ankle problem.

Evans gave the versatile Czech, Berger, his first start since November 22 and Norwegian Bjornebye his first since December 6 — but it was a long, desperate struggle to try to pick up the pieces and put themselves together again after those shattering early blows. There were times when Middlesbrough looked more likely to strike a third blow than Liverpool setting up a recovery.

Robbie Fowler tried a quick response but Aussie keeper Mark Schwarzer denied him by tipping his effort over the bar while Michael Owen, a hero as England's youngest player this century a week earlier and scorer of a magnificent hat-trick against Wednesday the previous weekend, could do little against the resolute home defence.

Liverpool managed to attack in numbers, but Middlesbrough were prepared to wait and hit them on the counter.

Schwarzer again denied Fowler, turning aside a left-foot shot and Ince claimed a penalty, with good cause, when he was pulled back in the area by Vladimir Kinder. Durkin ignored that claim, but two minutes later he booked Harkness for dissent.

There was little convincing evidence that Liverpool could turn this one around. In last year's quarter-final they went two down and although Steve McManaman managed to pull one back then they could not complete the recovery.

Evans reshaped his side at the start of the second-half. Matteo, who had been doubtful with a leg injury, retired and Oyvind Leonhardsen was sent on.

The Norwegian went into his usual place on the left of midfield with Liverpool reverting to a back four, but there were still problems every time Middlesbrough attacked.

So it will be a Chelsea v Middlesbrough Coca Cola Cup Final.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUBSCRIPTIONS CONTACT OPTUS ON 13 33 11

WORLD STOP PRESS

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP

The African Nations Cup is wide open as the competition enters the quarter-final stages with four World Cup finalists — Cameroon, Morocco, South African and Tunisia — in contention.

Only Nigeria, Africa's fifth entrant for France 98, is missing after being suspended by the African Confederation (CAF) for not competing in the last Finals in South Africa.

Congo DR coach Pierre Kalala put it succinctly.

"At this stage of the competition, all the teams have earned their places," he said. "There are no easy matches in the quarter-finals and it's anybody's guess who will win."

Kalala used war metaphors in describing preparations to meet Cameroon.

"We are awaiting D-Day so we can throw ourselves into battle. And we have 48 hours until the kick-off to make sure we are at our best," he added.

Cameroon have had one of the easiest passages into the last eight, with Algeria, Burkina Faso and Guinea in their group, and they now play on paper one of the easier quarter-finalists.

In the second quarter-final in capital city Ouagadougou, Tunisia met hosts Burkina Faso in the Fourth August stadium. Tunisia won their Group B, which comprised Congo DR, Ghana and Togo.

Tunisia, the surprise runners-up at the last finals, have never won this event but with Burkina Faso as their last eight opponents, they should now at least reach the semi-finals.

Coach Henry Kasperczak leads the side into their eighth finals appearance and will be looking to key players Zoubeir Beya and Mehdi Ben Slimane to take them to further success.

Burkina Faso, who were the only team in Africa to lose all their World Cup qualifiers, have picked themselves up marvellously under French coach Philippe Troussier in reaching the quarter-finals.

They have few professional players and have excelled with group wins over Algeria and Guinea.

The winners of the Tunisia v Burkina Faso clash meet the winners of the third quarter-final at Ouagadougou's Municipal stadium between Ivory Coast and Egypt.

Ivory Coast, led by French coach Robert Nouzaret, come up against Egypt, who have the tournament's top scorer with five goals: Hossam Hassan.

The competition has been like playing at home for Ivory Coast, who are southern neighbours of Burkina Faso; thousands of fans have come across the border to cheer their team on.

Ivory's veteran striker Joen Tiehi, 33, has been excelling and the team scored 10 goals in their opening three matches against Namibia, South Africa and Angola to top Group C.

Egypt beat Mozambique 2-0 and thrashed Zambia 4-0 before losing 1-0 to Morocco in their last group match, conceding a Mustapha al-Hadji goal in the dying seconds.

Egypt have competed in a record 15 finals but have not won the event since 1986, and their fanatical fans will be expecting success this time, particularly as they failed to reach the World Cup Finals.

The last quarter-final is perhaps the most eagerly-awaited: South Africa v Morocco.

The South Africans have made a huge impact on the game since their return to international football.

CONGO EXCEED EXPECTATIONS

Less than a year after civil war in their country, the footballers from the new Democratic Republic of Congo have exceeded all expectation at the African Nations' Cup Finals.

Even those of their own players.

"We thought we would win maybe one match here," said striker Emeka Mamale on the eve of his team's quarter-final with Cameroon in Bobo-Dioulasso.

But the Congolese won twice in their opening round group, including a shock 1-0 defeat of Ghana.

Ghana 1958

Their progress into the last eight has come despite limited resources, little pre-tournament preparation and a squad devoid of several of the country's key foreign-based players.

The civil war, which led to the downfall of president Mobutu Sese Seko nine months ago and imposed a new government under Laurent Kabila, brought an abrupt halt to league competition in the country as well as changes to Congo's soccer structure.

One of Kabila's first symbolic gestures in government was to change the nickname of the team from Mobutu's favoured 'Leopards' to the 'Simbas'. But team officials said there had been little other assistance in getting the team ready for their anticipation in the Nations' Cup Finals in Burkina Faso.

No friendly internationals were organised, the lack of communication facilities in Kinshasa made it difficult to call-up experienced players from clubs in Europe and South Africa, and there were few funds for preparation.

It was only at the last moment that a brief training camp was organised in Mali, the western neighbour of Burkina Faso, which coach Louis Watunda said helped him put together a makeshift team for the African championships.

"I noticed a real determination among the players. They worked very hard, there was a real desire for success," said the 51-year-old coach.

"The rest came easy because it is a tight group of players who have a fighting spirit in training and a serenity before the big matches."

Watunda said he was the only person not surprised by the team's second place finish in their opening round group and their progress into Friday's quarter-final.

"The group was tough but we looked good in training and I knew with good organisation we could create a few surprises."

Watunda said the team's quarter-final placing had created tremendous excitement back home and has hopefully prompted more interest from the new government, whose financial support is badly needed.

USA TO PLAY DUTCH

Less than ten days after its historic victory over world champion Brazil, the US team faced another daunting task when it played the Netherlands for the first time last weekend.

The Dutch team, one of Europe's strongest, is nearly at full strength for the exhibition game, missing only forward Dennis Bergkamp, who doesn't like plane travel!

"It's important that we challenge ourselves by playing very good opposition," US coach Steve Sampson said.

"We're very proud of what we've accomplished over the last few months, the excitement we've created around this team for all

our fans across the United States."

With victories over Brazil, Sweden, Cuba and Costa Rica this year, the United States moved up 14 positions to 12th in the FIFA world computer ranking released last week — two spots ahead of Italy and five ahead of Argentina.

The Americans, whose previous best was 14th for three months in 1996, had been as low as 35th in October.

Despite losing to Mexico 1-0 in the championship of the CONCACAF Gold Cup, the US team is convinced it has improved.

"We're proud of what we did in the Gold Cup, but everything here is focused on getting to the World Cup and preparing for the World Cup," defender Alexi Lalas said.

"The most important thing is we get the most preparation on and off the field, so when we step on the field in France we're ready to go."

While Brazil was missing many of its best players when it lost to the Americans 1–0 in the semi-finals of the CONCACAF Gold Cup, the 25th-ranked Dutch won't be able to claim the Americans beat the second-string. Their roster includes forwards Patrick Kluivert and Marc Overmars; midfielders Ronald de Boer, Wim Jonk, Aaron Winter and Clarence Seedorf; defenders Frank de Boer, Winston Bogarde and Michael Reiziger; and goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar.

"They'll be a good test," midfielder Claudio Reyna said. "The Europeans play a game with more speed."

The Americans are 7-1-2 in their last ten games. Before the loss to Mexico, they had won six straight games for the first time and had matched the team record for an unbeaten streak at nine.

After that the Americans head for Brussels, where they play Belgium in an exhibition game. With World Cup games against No. 2 Germany and No. 8 Yugoslavia coming up in June, the United States knows it has a tough task ahead.

"It's important to establish a belief that we can beat teams like that on any given day," Lalas said. "We've been playing very, very well, especially considering we've been on the road travelling for six or seven weeks, which takes its toll mentally and physically."

FIFA EXTRA-AGM

FIFA on Thursday called an extraordinary meeting of its Executive Committee to discuss the position of general secretary Sepp Blatter, in relation to the forthcoming elections for the presidency of international soccer's ruling body.

The meeting will take place on March 13 here and the decision to call it follows intense pressure from European football's ruling body UEFA.

UEFA want Blatter to reveal whether he plans to stand against their president Lennart Johansson in the race to replace current FIFA chief Joao Havelange.

UEFA said that 13 members of FIFA's executive committee had submitted a written request demanding an extraordinary meeting to discuss a possible conflict of interests for Blatter if he stands.

FIFA confirmed on Thursday that 13 of the 24 members had submitted such a request. FIFA rules state an extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee must be called if 11 of the 24 members request one.

Earlier this year UEFA gave Blatter, who is believed to be Havelange's chosen heir, until Jan 31 to reveal whether he will stand against Johansson, but received no response.

They argue that if Blatter is a candidate for the FIFA presidency he cannot continue as secretary general in the meantime.

Officially, Blatter has until April 7 to put forward his candidacy.

BRAZIL WANTS A GURU

Brazil's disappointing play in the CONCACAF Gold Cup has sparked a national debate over whether head coach Mario Zagallo needs a helper.

Brazilian media reported that Ricardo Teixeira, president of the Brazilian Soccer Confederation, wants to appoint a team supervisor. It's the same job Zagallo himself held in 1994, when Brazil won an unprecedented fourth World Cup.

Carlos Alberto Parreira was Brazil's head coach, while Zagallo was supervisor, counsellor and guru.

"When I was invited to be coach, the question came up: who will be Zagallo's Zagallo?"

Carlos Alberto, captain of 1970 team and later the New York Cosmos, said Brazil needs a new coach.

"Zagallo is a second-rate coach," Alberto was quoted as saying in the newspaper Estado de Sao Paulo. "He sends the wings up to attack, something that I was doing 40 years ago."

COLOMBIA NINE FRIENDLIES

Colombia will play nine friendly matches between March and the start of the World Cup Finals in France in June, the Colombian Football Federation announced.

The South Americans, drawn in Group G with England, Romania and Tunisia, unveiled a programme of eight internationals and a match against Major League Soccer champions D.C. United.

Four of the matches will be played in

the United States and will test the mettle of the South Americans.

The schedule is:

March 8: D.C. United v C, Washington
March 13: C v Bulgaria, Bogota
March 25: C v Yugoslavia, Miami
March 29: C v Paraguay, New York
April 22: Chile v C, Santiago
April 25: Uruguay v C, Montevideo
May 24: C v Scotland, New York
May 30: Germany v C, Frankfurt
June 4: Belgium v C, Brussels
C= Colombia

FANS RIOT IN CHILE

Police arrested 34 fans on Wednesday night as rival spectators fought during a cup match between local rivals Colo Colo Universidad de Chile.

Referee Eduardo Gamboa had to suspend play with the match goal-less after 30 minutes as the fighting continued.

No surprise that the two teams are traditional foes.

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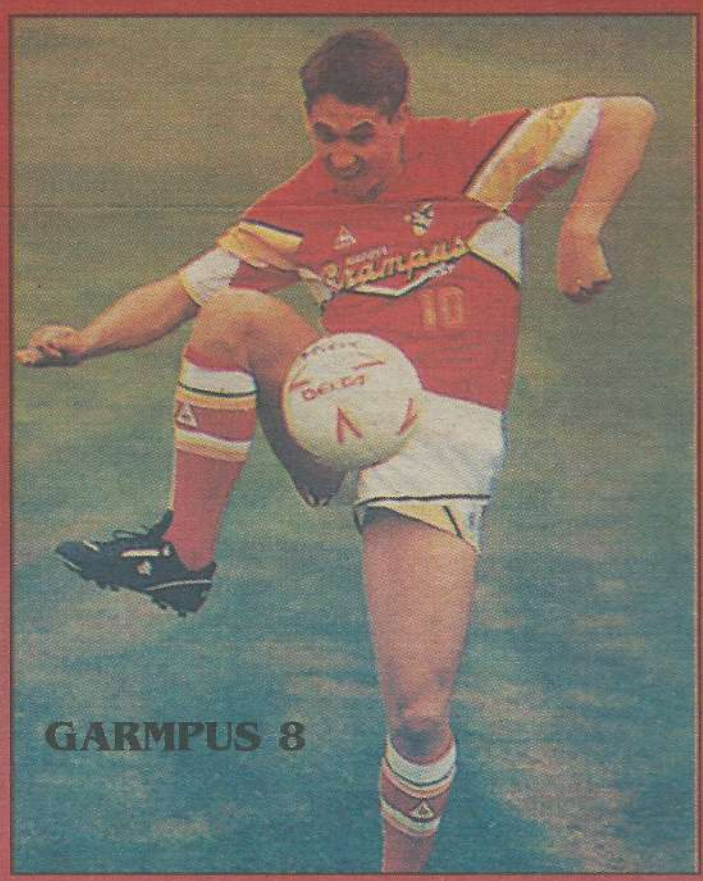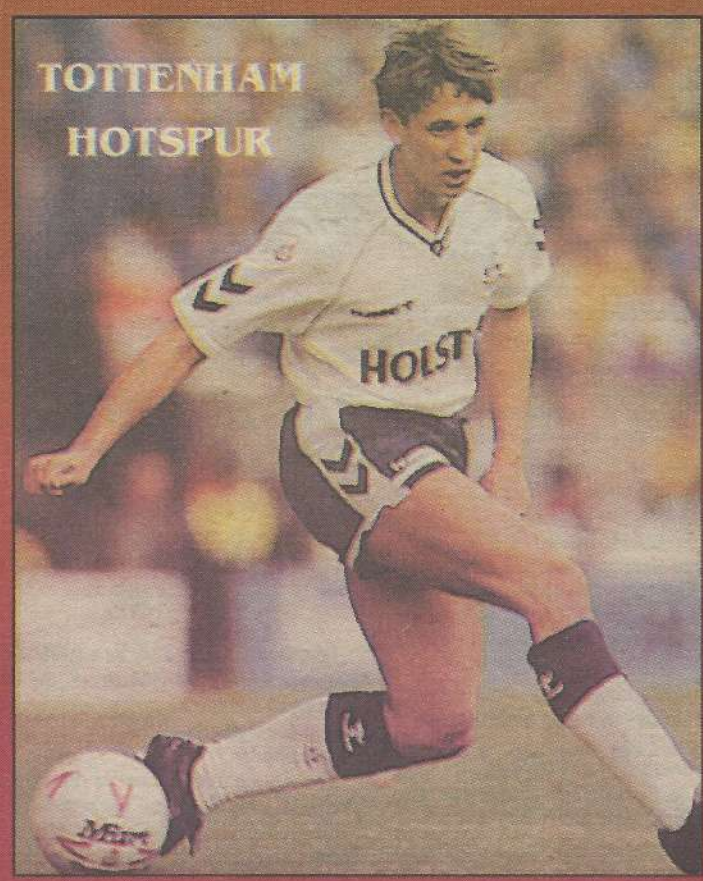
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